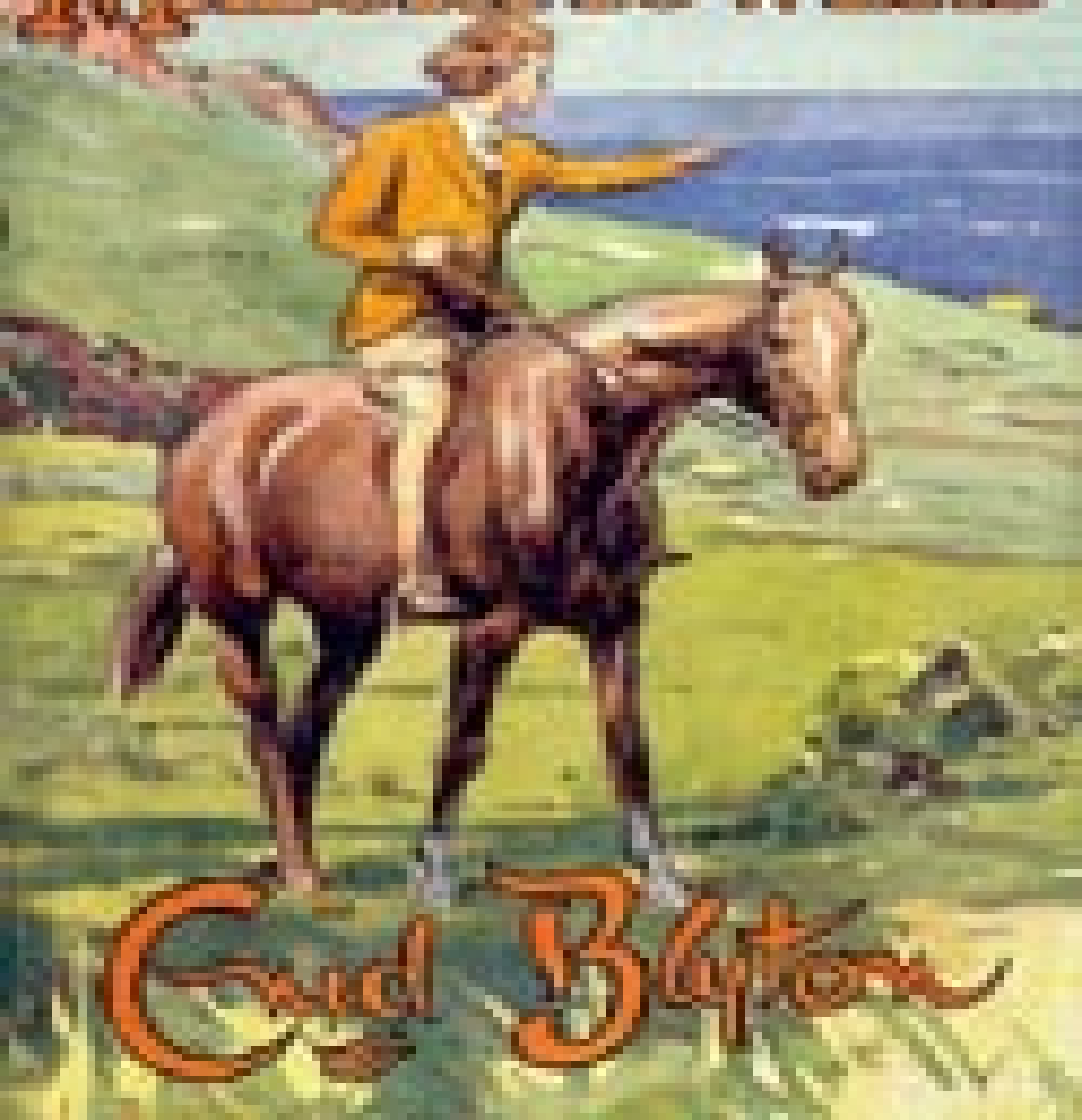


# LAST TERM at MALORY TOWERS



Good Bay

Malory Towers - 06

Last Term at Malory Towers

By

Enid Blyton

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First Dayj

My last term! thought Darrell, as she got ready to go downstairs. My very last term! I shall be eighteen on my next birthday - I'm almost grown-up!

A yell came from below, 'Darrell! Aren't you ever coming? Daddy says do you mean to leave today or tomorrow?'

'Coming!' shouted back Darrell. She snatched up her minis-racket and her small suitcase and fled down the stairs, two at a time as usual.

Her young sister Felicity was there, waiting for her. Both were dressed in the orange and brown uniform of Malory Towers - dark brown coat and skirt, white blouse, orange tie, straw hat with orange band.

'It's the very last time I shall go off with you in the same uniform,' said Darrell, rather solemnly. 'Next term you'll be going alone, Felicity. How will you like it?'

'Not a bit,' said Felicity, quite cheerfully. 'Still, you'll be having a wonderful time yourself, going off to the University. Don't look so solemn.'

'Last times are always a bit horrid,' said Darrell. She went out to the car with Felicity. Their father was just about to begin a fanfare on the horn. Why, oh why was he always kept waiting like this? Didn't they know it was time to start?

'Thank goodness you've appeared at last,' he said. 'Get in. Now, where's your mother? Honestly, this family wants a daily shepherd to round up all its sheep! Ah, 1 i\*'rc >I]c o iiiit's!

As Mrs Rivers got into the car, Felicity slipped out again. Her father didn't notice her, and started up the car. Darrell gave a shriek.

'Daddy, Daddy! Wail! Felicity's not in!'

He looked round in astonishment. 'But I saw her get in,' he said. 'Bless us all, where's she gone now?'

'She forgot to say good-bye to the kitten. I expect,' said Darrell, grinning. 'She has to say good-bye to everything, even the goldfish in the pond. I used to do that too - but I never wept over them all like Felicity!'

Felicity appeared again at top speed. She flung herself into the car, panting. 'Forgot to say good-bye to the gardener,' she said. 'He promised to look after my seedlings for me, and count how many strawberries come on my strawberry plants. Oh dear - it's so horrid to say good-bye to everything.'

'Weil, don't then, said Dane!!.

'Oh, but I like to,' said Felicity. 'Once I've done a really good round of good-byes, I feel that I can look forward to school properly then. I say - I wonder if that awful Josephine is coming back! She kept saying something about going to America with those frightful people of hers, so I hope she has.'

'I hope she has lot).' said Darrell, remembering the loud-voiced, bad-mannered Josephine Jones. 'She doesn't fit into Malory Towers somehow. I can't imagine why the Head took her.'

'Well - I suppose she thought Malory Towers might tone her down and make something of her,' said Felicity, 'it's not many people it doesn't alter for the better, really. Even me!'

Gosh - has it done that?' said Darrell, pretending to be surprised. 'I'm glad to know it. Oh dear - I wish it wasn't my last term. It seems no time at all since I was first setting out, six years ago, a little shrimp of twelve.'

'There YOU <>O ana in - cominu over all mournful,' said

Felicity, cheerfully. 'I can't think why you don't feel proud and happy - you've been games captain of one or two forms, you've been head-girl of forms - and now you're head-girl of the whole school, and have been for two terms! I shall never be that.'

'I hope you will,' said Darrell. 'Anyway, I'm glad Sally and I are leaving together and going to the same college. We shall still be with each other. Daddy, don't worry! we're calling for Sally, will you?'

'I hadn't forgotten,' said her father. He took the road that led to Sally Hope's home. Soon they were swinging into the drive, and there, on the front steps, were Sally and her small sister of about six or seven.

'Hallo, Darrell, hallo, Felicity!' called Sally. 'I'm quite ready. Mother, where are you? Here are the Riverses.'

Sally's small sister called out loudly: 'I'm coming to Malory Towers one day ~ in six years' time.'

'Lucky you, Daffy!' called back Felicity. 'It's the best school in the world!'

Sally got in and squeezed herself between Felicity and Darrell. She waved good-bye and off they went again.

'It's the last time, Darrell!' she said. 'I wish it was the first!'

'Oh, don't you start now,' said Felicity. 'Darrell's been glooming all the journey, so far.'

No cheek from you, Felicity Rivers!' said Sally, with a grin. 'You're only a silly little second-former, remember!'

'I'll be in the third form next term,' said Felicity. 'I'm creeping up the school! It takes a long time, though.'

'It seems a long time while it's happening,' said Sally.

But now it's our last term, it all seems to have gone in a flash.'

They talked without stopping the whole of the journey, and then, as they drew near to Malory Towers, Sally and Darrell fell silent. They always loved the first glimpse of their lovely school, with its four great towers,

one at each corner.

They rounded a bend, and the eyes of all three fastened on a big square building of solid grey stone standing high up on a hill that fell steeply down to the sea. At each corner of the building stood rounded towers - North Tower, East, West and South. The school looked like an old castle. Beyond it was the dark-blue Cornish sea.

'We're nearly there!' sang Felicity. 'Daddy, go faster! Catch up the car in front, I'm sure Susan is in it.'

Just then a car roared by them, overtaking not only them but the one in front too. Mr Rivers braked sharply as it passed him, almost forcing him into the hedge.

'That's Josephine's car!' called Felicity. 'Did you ever see such a monster?'

'Monster is just about the right word,' said her mother, angrily. 'Forcing me into the side like that. What do they think they are doing, driving as fast as that in a country lane?'

'Oh, they always drive like that,' said Felicity. 'Jo's father can't bear driving under ninety miles an hour, he says. He's got four cars, Daddy, all as big as that.'

'He can keep them, then,' grunted her father, scarlet with anger. He had just the same quick temper as Darrell's. 'I'll have a word with him about his driving if I see him at the school. A real road-hog!'

Felicity gave a squeal of delight. 'Oh, Daddy, you've hit on just the right name. He's exactly like a hog to look at - awfully fat, with little piggy eyes. Jo is just like him.'

'Then I hope she's no friend of yours,' said her father.

'She's not,' said Felicity. 'Susan's my friend. Here we are! Here's the gate. There's June! And Julie and Pam. Pam, PAM!'

'You'll deafen me,' said Mrs Rivers, laughing. She turned to her husband. 'You won't be able to get near the steps up to the iron door today. dear - there are too many cars, and the school coaches have brought up the train girls too.'

The big drive was certainly crowded. 'It's as noisy as a football crowd,' said Mr Rivers with his sudden smile. 'It always amazes me that girls can make so much noise!'

Darrell, Felicity and Sally jumped out, clutching their rackets and bags. They were immediately engulfed in a crowd of excited girls.

'Darrell! You never wrote to me!'

'Felicity, have you seen Julie? She's been allowed to bring back her pony, Jack Horner! He's wizard!'

'Hallo, Sally! How tanned you are!'

'There's Alicia! Alicia, ALICIA! Betty! I say, everyone's arriving at once.'

A loud-voiced man, followed by a much overdressed woman, came pushing through the crowd, making his way to the enormous American car that had forced Mr Rivers into the hedge.

'Well, good-bye, Jo,' he was saying. 'Mind you're bottom of the form. I always was! And don't you stand any nonsense from the mistresses, ha ha! You do what you like and have a good time.'

Darrell and Sally looked at one another in disgust. No wonder Jo was so awful it that was the way her father talked to her. And what a voice!

Jo Jones's father was obviously very pleased with himself indeed. He grinned round at the seething girls, threw out his chest, and clapped his fat little daughter on the back.

'Well, so long, Jo! And if you want any extra lodd, just let us know.'

He caught sight of Mr Rivers looking at him, and he nodded and smiled. 'You got a girl here too?' he enquired, jovially.

'I have two,' said Mr Rivers, in his clear confident voice. 'But let me tell you this, Mr Jones - if I hadn't swung quickly into the hedge just now, when you cut in on that narrow lane, I might have had no daughters at all. Disgraceful driving!'

Mr Jones was startled and taken aback. He glanced quickly round to see if anyone had heard. He saw that quite a lot of girls were listening and, after one look at Mr Rivers's unsmiling face, he decided not to say a word more.



'Good for you. Daddy, good for you!' said Felicity, who was nearby. 'I bet nobody ever ticks him off - and now you have! Jo's just like him. Look, there she is.'

Jo scowled back at Felicity and Mr Rivers. She hadn't heard what Felicity said about her, of course, but she had heard Felicity's father ticking off her own, and she didn't like it a bit. Never mind - she would take it out of Felicity this term, if she could.

"You must go, darlings," said Mrs Rivers, leaning out of the car. 'Have you got everything? Good-bye, Darrell dear - and Felicity. Good-bye, Sally. Have a good term! The summer term is always the nicest of all!'

The car sped away. Felicity plunged into the milling crowd and was lost. Sally and Darrell went more sedately, as befitted two sixth-formers.

'It's nice to be at the top,' said Darrell. 'But I can't help envying those yelling, screaming lower-form kids. Just look at them. What a crowd!'

Darrell and Sally went up the steps, and into the big hall. 'Let's go up to our study,' said Darrell. 'We can dump our things there and have a look round.'

They went up to the small, cosy room they shared between them. The sixth-formers were allowed to have these studies, one to every two girls, and both Sally and Darrell loved their small room.

They had put down a bright rug that Mrs Rivers had given them, and each had a favourite picture on the walls. There were some old cushions provided by both mothers, and a few ornaments on the mantelpiece - mostly china or wooden horses and dogs.

'I wonder who'll have this room next term,' said Darrell, going to the window and looking out. 'It's one of the nicest.'

'Quite the nicest,' said Sally, sinking down into one of the small armchairs. 'I suppose one of the fifth-formers will have it. Lucky things!'

The sixth-formers had a common-room of their own, as well as studies. In the common-room was a radio, of course, a library, and various cupboards and shelves for the use of the girls. It looked out over the sea and was full of air and light and sun. The girls loved it.

'Better go down and report to Matron,' said Darrell, when they had unpacked their night-bags, and set out two clocks, three or four new ornaments, and Darrell had put a little table-cloth into a drawer, which she had brought back to use in the room. It would look nice if they

gave a tea-party, as they often did!

'Got your health certificate?' asked Sally. 'I wonder if Irene has got hers. She has remembered it faithfully for the last three or four terms. I'd love her to forget it just this last time.'

Darrell laughed. Irene's health certificate was a standing joke in the school. 'I've got Felicity's certificate with mine,' she said. 'I'd better give it to her. Come on, let's go down.'

They went down and found Matron, who was standing in the middle of a mob of girls. They were handing out health certificates to her and, in the case of the lower-formers, handing over their term's pocket-money too.

A voice greeted Darrell and Sally. 'Hallo! Here we are again!'

Irene!' said Darrell and Sally at once. Irene grinned at them. She looked very little different from when Darrell had seen her the first time, six years back - older and taller, but still the same old untidy scatter-brain. But her looks belied her. Irene was a genius at music and brilliant at maths - it was only in ordinary things that she was a feather-head.

'Irene!' called Matron, who had been in despair over the girl's health certificate almost every term. 'Am I to isolate you this term, because you've forgotten your certificate again - or have you condescended to remember it?'

'Here you are, Matron!' said Irene, and handed an envelope to her. She winked at Darrell and Sally. Matron opened it. Out fell a photograph of Irene in a swimming- cost nine!

'Irene! This is a photograph!' said Matron, annoyed.

'Oh, sorry. Matron. Wrong envelope,' said Irene, and handed her another. Matron tore it open, and glared at Irene.

'Is this a joke? This is a dog's licence!'

'Gosh!' said Irene. 'So that's where old Rover's licence went! Sorry, Matron. This must be the right envelope!'

Everyone was giggling. Alicia had now joined the mob round Matron, her bright eyes enjoying the joke. Matron opened the third envelope. She began to laugh.

It was a cleverly drawn picture of herself scolding Irene for forgetting her health certificate. Belinda, Irene's friend, had drawn it, and the two of them had pushed it into the third envelope for a joke.

'I shall keep this as a memento of you, Irene,' said Matron. 'It shall be pinned up in my room as a warning to all girls who

have bad memories. And now - what about the real thing, please?'

The 'real thing' was produced at last, and Matron pronounced herself satisfied 'I suppose you had to keep up the tradition of losing your certificate for the last time,' she smiled. 'Now, June, where's yours - and you, Jo?'

Felicity came up and Darrell gave her her certificate to hand in. Then she went off with Alicia and Sally to see who was back.

'I bet that's Bill!' said Darrell, suddenly, as she caught the sound of horses' hooves up the drive. 'I wonder how many brothers are with her this time!'

Wilhelmina, Bill for short, had seven brothers, all of whom were mad on horses. Some of them accompanied her to school each term, which always caused a great sensation! The girls ran to the window to see.

'Yes - it's Bill - but there are only three brothers with her,' said Sally. 'I suppose that means another one's gone into the army, or into a job. Look, there's Clarissa too. She must have come with Bill on Merrylegs, her little horse.'

'And there's Gwen!' said Alicia, with malice in her voice. 'How many many fond farewells have we seen

between Gwen and her mother? Let's least our eyes on this one - it will be the last!'

Bui Gwen was on her guard now. Too often had the girls imitated her weeping farewells. She stepped out of the ear, looking rather solemn, but very dignified. She kissed her mother and Miss Winter, her old governess, and wouldn't let

them be silly over her. But she didn't kiss her father good-bye.

He called after her. 'Good-bye, Gwen.'

'Good-bye,' said Gwen, in such a hard voice that the girls looked at one another in surprise.

'There's been a row!' said Sally. To expect her father's ticked her off again for some silly nonsense. It's a jolly good thing for Gwendoline Mary that there's one sensible person in her family!

Gwen's mother was now dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief. The car swung round, went down the drive and disappeared. Gwen came into the room behind the others.

'Hallo!' she said. 'Had good hols?'

'Hallo, Gwen,' said Darrell. 'Did you?'

'Fair,' said Gwen. 'My father was an awful nuisance, though.'

The others said nothing. Gwen never could understand that it just wasn't decent to run down your parents in public.

'Mother had fixed up for me to go to Switzerland to a simply marvellous finishing school,' said Gwen. 'Frightfully expensive. All the best people send their girls there. Lady Jane Tregennon's girl's going there, and . . .'

The same old Gwen! thought Darrell and Sally, feeling sick. Conceited, snobbish, silly. They turned away, feeling that nothing in the world would ever teach Gwen to be an ordinary decent, kindly girl.

Gwen didn't in the least mind talking to people's backs. She went on and on. 'And then, when it was all fixed. Dad said it was too expensive, and my lie said it was all nonsense, and I ought to get a job - a job] He said . . .'

'I don't think you ought to tell us all this,' said Darrell, suddenly. 'I'm sure your father would hate it.'

'I don't care if he would or not,' said Gwen. 'He's tried to spoil everything. But I told him what I thought of him. I got my own way. I'm going!'

Sally looked at Darrell and Alicia. This was Gwen's last term. She had spent six years at Malory Towers, and had had many sharp lessons. Yet it seemed as if she had learned nothing of value at all!

She probably never will now, thought Darrell. It's too late. She walked out of the room with Sally and Alicia, all of them disgusted. Gwen scowled after them resentfully. People so often walked out on her, and she never could stop them

Just as I was going to tell them some of the things I said to Dad, thought Gwen. I'm glad I hardly said good-bye to him. I'm his only daughter, and he treats me like that! Well, now he knows what I think of him.

She was so full of herself and her victory that she quite forgot to be mournful and homesick, as she usually pretended to be. She wandered on and found little Mary-Lou - a much bigger Mary-Lou now, but still shy and ready to think that most people were much better and more interesting than she was.

Mary-Lou always listened to everyone, Gwen began to tell her again all she had told the others. Mary-Lou stared at her

in disgust. 'I don't believe you said anything like that to your father!' she said. 'You can't be as beastly as all that'.

And little Mary-Lou actually walked off with her nose in the air! Gwen suddenly began to realize that she wasn't going to be at all popular in her last term if she

wasn't.

When supper-time came, the girls could see who was back and who wasn't. They could see the new girls in their Tower and they could see any new mistresses. Each Tower had its own common-rooms and dining-rooms. North Tower, where Darrell and her friends were, overlooked the sea, and was supposed to be the best Tower of all - though naturally the girls in the other Towers thought the same of theirs!

Darrell was sure there would be no new girls at all in the sixth. It was rare for a new girl to come so late to Malory Towers. She was very much surprised to see two new faces at the sixth-form table!

One girl was tall and sturdy and rather masculine looking, with her short cropped hair, and big legs and feet. The other was small, beautifully made, and had small hands and feet. As soon as she spoke, Darrell realized that she was French.

Mam'zelle Dupont introduced the girl, with one of her beaming smiles.

'Girls! This is Suzanne! She is niece to Mam'zelle Rougier who is in South Tower, but there is no room there for her, so she has come to me here. She will be in the sixth form - and she must learn the language well. Eh, Suzanne?'

'Certainement, Mam'zelle Dupont,' answered Suzanne, in a demure voice. She flashed a quick look round at the sixth-

formers with bright black eyes, then lowered them again. Darrell felt a sudden liking for her.

'Ah non - you must not say one word of French, you bad girl!' scolded Mam'zelle. 'You must say "Certane- lee", not "certainement"!'

'Zer-tane-leeee,' drawled Suzanne, and the girls laughed. Darrell nudged Sally.

'She's going to have some fun with Mam'zelle,' she said, in a low voice. 'And we're going to have some fun with Suzanne'

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Mam'zelle then turned to the other new girl. 'And this is - how do you call yourself?' she asked the sturdy newcomer. 'Amanda Shoutalot?'

The girls laughed. The new girl gave Mam'zelle a rather contemptuous look. 'No - Amanda Chartelow/ she said, in a loud voice.

'Ah - that is what I said,' protested Mam'zelle. Amanda Shoutalot. Poor Amanda - her school has been burned down by fire! Helm - it exists no longer!'

Nobody quite knew what to say. Amanda took some more bread, and ignored Mam'zelle. Gwen entered headlong into the gap in the conversation.

'Oh dear - what a dreadful thing! Did anyone get hurt?'

'No,' said Amanda, helping herself to more salad. 'It happened in the holidays. You probably read about it in ;he



papers. It was Trenigan Towers.'

'Gosh, yes - I did read about it/ said Sally, remembering.  
'Trenigan Towers! That's about the most famous school for sport in the country, isn't it? I mean - you win every single match you play, and you win all the tennis shields and lacrosse cups?'

'That's right/ said Amanda. 'Well, it's gone. There wasn't time to find another building in a hurry, so we all had to scatter and find other schools. I don't know- how long I'll be here - maybe a term, maybe longer. You haven't much of a name for sport, have you, at Maiorv lowers?'

This was rather too much from a new girl, even if she had come into the sixth form, and had arrived from a famous sports school. Darrell stared at her coldly.

'We're not too bad,' she said.

'Perhaps you'd like to give us a little coaching,' said Alicia in the smooth voice that most of the girls recognized as dangerous.

'I might,' said Amanda, and said no more. The girls glanced at one another. Then they looked at Amanda and saw how strong she must be. She was a great hefty girl about five foot ten inches tall. How much did she weigh?

Must be thirteen stone, I should think! thought Darrell, comparing Amanda with the slim, elegant French girl. Goodness - have we got to put up with her all the term? I shall find it hard to squash her]

Sally was thinking the same. She was games captain for the whole school, a most important position. What Sally said had

to be taken notice of, from the sixth form down to the first. Sally was a first-rate tennis player, a first-rate lacrosse player, and one of the finest swimmers Malory Towers had ever had. Nobody but Darrell could beat her at tennis, and that very seldom.

She took another look at the stolid, rather scornful-looking Amanda. It was going to be very very difficult to give orders to her - especially as Amanda might easily prove to be a better tennis player and swimmer than even Sally herself. Sally was not as hefty as Amanda, though she was strong and supple.

'You were lucky to be able to find a place at Malory Towers,' gushed Gwen.

'Was I?' said Amanda, coldly, staring at Gwen as if she didn't like her at all. Gwen blinked. What a horrible girl! She hoped Alicia would be able to deal with her. Alicia could deal with anybody - her sharp tongue was quicker and more cutting than anyone else's in the school.

'I suppose you'll be going in for the Olympic Games.'

said Alicia, meaning to be sarcastic. 'They're held next year in . . .'

'Oh yes. I should think I shall go in for about five different events,' said Amanda, calmly. 'My coach at Trenigan said I ought to win at least two.'

The girls gasped. Alicia looked taken aback. It had never entered her head that her scornful remark could be true. She looked so discomfited that Irene grinned.

'We ought to feel very honoured to have you here, Amanda!' she drawled.

'Thanks,' said Amanda, without looking at her.

'Amanda is such a beeg, beeg girl,' began Mam'zelle, mistaking Amanda's ungraciousness for shyness. 'She will be so marvellous at tennis. Sally, perhaps she will be in the Second Team, n'est-ce pas?'

Nobody replied to this. Sally merely grunted. Mam'zelle pushed on, under the impression that she was putting 'this great beeg Amanda' at her ease.

'How tall are you, Amanda?' she asked, feeling that the girl must be at least seven feet tall; she had made plump little Mam'zelle feel so short when she had walked in beside her! 'And how many - er - how do you say it - how many pebbles do you weigh?'

There was a squeal of laughter from the table. Even Amanda deigned to smile. Mam'zelle gazed round indignantly.

'What have I said?' she demanded. 'Is it not right - pebbles?'

'No - stones, Mam'zelle,' chorused the girls, in delight. 'Our weight is measured by stones, not pebbles.'

'Stones - pebbles - they are the same,' said Mam'zelle. 'Never, never shall I learn this English language.'

The bell rang for the meal to end. All the girls got up, laughing. Dear old Mam'zelle - her mistakes would fill a

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Darrell and her friends went up to her <tiuv to talk am!

gossip. There were the usual crowd - Sally, Alicia, Belinda, Irene, Mary-Lou, Bill and Clarissa. Mavis was not there.

'It seems strange without Mavis,' said Sally. 'She's gone to train as a singer now. Perhaps we shall all crowd into her concerts one day!'

'To miss quiet old Janet too,' said Darrell. 'She is training as a dress designer. She ought to be jolly good at it! Do you remember the marvellous dresses she made for us when we gave that pantomime in the tilth form?'

'Catherine has left too,' said Alicia. 'Thank goodness! I never knew such a door-mat in my life. No wonder we called her Saint Catherine!'

'She wasn't so bad,' said Mary-Lou, loyally. 'It was only that she did like doing things for people so much.'

'She did them in the wrong way, that's all,' said Bill.

'She always made herself such a martyr. What's she going to do?'

'She's going to stay at home and help Mama,' said Alicia, rather maliciously. 'It'll suit her down to the ground. Mama thinks herself a bit of an invalid, I gather

- so Catherine will really enjoy herself, being a saintly little daughter.'

'Don't be unkind, Alicia,' said Mary-Lou. 'Catherine was kind underneath her door-mat ways.'

'To take your word for it,' said Alicia, smiling at Mary-Lou. 'Don't get all hot and bothered. This is only a good old

gossip! What are you going to do when you leave next year, Mary-Lou?'

'I'm leaving sooner than that,' said Mary-Lou. 'I've made up my mind what I'm going to be, and I'm going off to train in September. I'm going to be a hospital nurse

- a children's nurse. I never wanted to be anything else, really. I'm going to train at Great Ormond Street Hospital, it's all settled.'

The others looked at quiet, loyal, idealistic Mary-Lou.

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Immediately each one of them saw that she had chosen the right career for herself. Nursing was a vocation - something you felt you had to do, for the sake of other people. It was absolutely right for Mary-Lou.

'I can't imagine anything you'd love better, Mary-Lou!' said Darrell, warmly, 'it's exactly right for you, and very exactly right for it! Lucky children who have you to nurse them!'

Mary-Lou looked pleased and embarrassed. She looked round at the others. 'What are we all going to do?' she said. 'Belinda's easy, of course.'

'Yes. I've yet to be an artist,' said Belinda. 'I always knew that. It's easy, of course, when you've got a gift. You can't do anything else but use it.'

'And Irene will study music,' said Sally. 'That's easy too. Bill - what about you - and Clarissa? You are both so mad on horses that I can't imagine you taking a job unless it's on horseback.'

Clarissa looked at Bill. She grinned. 'You've hit the nail on the head,' she said. 'Our job will be on horseback. Won't it, Bill?'

Bill nodded. 'Yes. Clarissa and I are going to run a riding school together.'

'You're not!' exclaimed the others, amazed and interested.

'Yes, we are. We decided it last hols,' explained Clarissa. 'I was staying with Bill, and we heard there were some stables for sale. We thought we'd like to get them, take our own horses, buy a few more, and begin a riding school. Actually it's not very far from here. We did wonder if we could get Miss Grayling to let us have some Malory Towers girls for pupils.'

'Wow!!' said Alicia, in deep admiration. 'It you two aren't dark horses!'

There was a yell of laughter at this typical Alicia joke. Lull grinned. She never said very much but she was a

most determined young person. Nobody had any doubt at all but that the Bill-Clarissa riding school would be very successful indeed.

'I'll see that all my children are your pupils, when they come to Malory Towers,' promised Alicia, with a grin. 'Fancy you two thinking all this out and never saying a word!'

There was a short silence. It seemed as if most of them knew what they were going to do when they left school - and had chosen rightly.

'Well, Sally and I are going to college,' said Darrell. 'And so is Alicia - and Betty is coming too. We're all going to St

Andrews up in Scotland, and what a good time we'll have!'

'You'll feel funny at first - being the youngest again, instead of the oldest,' said Belinda. 'I suppose you'll take Arts, Darrell. and eventually be a writer?'

'I don't know,' said Darrell. 'It's what I'd like to be. But, you see, Sally and I are not as lucky as you and Irene, Belinda. We haven't a gift that sticks out a mile - or a vocation like Mary-Lou. We've got to find what we're best fitted for, and we can do that at the University. We'll jolly well have to use our brains there, too. We'll be up against some brilliant people.'

Sally got up. 'Where did we put those biscuits, Darrell?' she said. 'Talking always makes me hungry. That's one thing that still makes me think we're not really very grown-up, even though we sometimes think we're getting on that way - we always feel so hungry. Grown-ups never seem to feel like that!'

'Long live our appetites!' said Alicia, taking a biscuit. 'And may our shadows never grow less!'

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Next day everyone awoke to the sound of the loud clang of the dressing-bell. New girls sat up in bed, startled, unused to the loud morning bell. Second-formers grunted and rolled over for another snooze. They were a notoriously lazy form that year. Darrell was always leasing her second-form sister, Felicity, about it.

'Lazy lot of kids,' she said. 'Always rushing down to breakfast with your ties half-knotted and your shoes .mdonc.

I wonder Miss Tarker doesn't deal out punishments by the hundred!'

'Oh, old Nosey does!' grinned Felicity. 'Was she as bad hi your time, Darrell, always nosing into this and that?'

'Never you mind,' said Darrell, remembering how she herself as a second-former had scrambled down to breakfast once with only one stocking on. 'How's that awful Josephine getting on?'

'Oh, throwing her weight about as usual,' said Felicity. 'Susan and I don't take much notice of her. It's when she comes up against June that she gets it hot! June simply pulverizes her! Serves her right.'

Darrell was quite sure that June would be able to pulverize' anyone, as Felicity called it. June was Alicia's -Ming cousin, a very tough and aggressive young person, ·nlv slightly mellowed so far by her stay at Malory lowers. She was very like Alicia, and had Alicia's quick 'ongue and sharp humour. She also had Alicia's love of ru ks, and everyone who taught her had learned to keep ;>,'v sharp e\ e indeed on lime

Except Mam'zelle Dupont! Anyone could play a joke on her and get away with it. But it was getting more difficult now, since Mam'zelle had discovered that there were actually booklets and leaflets sent out by firms, describing their jokes and tricks. She had made an intensive study of these, and was now much more on the alert.

'Do you remember when Mam'zelle played a trick on us?' said Felicity, giggling as she remembered. 'She bought a set of false celluloid teeth and fitted them over her own - do you remember? And everyone she smiled at had a fit, she looked so monstrous!'



'Yes, I shall never forget,' said Darrell. 'Dear old Mam'zelle. I do wish she'd play a "tweek" this last term. That's her one and only so far.'

One or two girls still hadn't come back, because of illness or some good reason. Moira in the sixth form was due back that day. She and Sally worked well together over the games time-tables and matches - but otherwise Moira was still not very likeable.

'She's always so jolly sure of herself - so determined to be cock-of-the-walk!' complained the girls. 'Never in the wrong, mustn't be contradicted - the great high-and- mighty Moira!'

Darrell caught sight of Amanda, the new sixth-former, going past. Something in the determined, confident walk reminded her of Moira. She smiled to herself.

'How will Moira like Amanda? It'll be funny to watch them together. There'll be some battles this term! Well - it's always more interesting when things happen. I wouldn't want my very last term to be dull.'

She went to the common-room after breakfast to find the others in her form. Sally was there, and Mary-Lou and Belinda.

The bell for the first class will soon go,' said Darrell. 'I suppose we'd better go down.'

Someone knocked at the door. 'Come in!' called Darrell. A scared-looking second-former put her nose round the door. 'Please,' she began.

'Come right in,' said Belinda. 'We like to know the face has got a body. We shan't eat you!'

The second-former inserted her body into the room loo. 'Please,' she said, 'Miss Grayling says will one of you take the new girls to her. She says not the new sixth-former, but any others in North Tower. She's waiting now.'

'Right,' said Darrell. 'Buzz off. Are the girls waiting in the hall, as usual?'

'Yes, please,' said the scared one, and buzzed off thankfully.

'I'll take the kids in/ said Mary-Lou, getting up. New girls always had to go to the Head on the morning of the second day. Miss Grayling liked to give them an idea of what was expected of them at Malory Towers and. as a rule, no girl forgot those few grave words. Darrell had never forgotten them.

She remembered them now and suddenly put out a hand to stop Mary-Lou.

'Mary-Lou - let me take them in. It's my job, anyway - and I just feel I'd somehow like to hear Miss Grayling talk to the new girls as she once talked to us. I'll go!'

'Right,' said Mary-Lou, understanding at once. She sat down again. Darrell went out of the room and into the hall. The new girls were there, five of them. Three were first-formers, one was a second-former and one a third-former. They all looked uncomfortable and rather scared.

'It's the head-girl!' hissed the third-former. 'Mind your Ps and Qs.'

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Nobody had any intention of not minding them. The little first-formers looked with wide eyes at this big, important

sixth-former. Darrell remembered how scared she had been of sixth-formers too, six years back, and

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she smiled kindly at them.

'Come along, kids. I'll take you in. Don't look so scared. You've come to the finest school in the world, so you're lucky!'

Darrell took the five girls to the Head Mistress's room, and stopped outside a door painted a deep cream colour. She knocked.

A low, familiar voice called out, 'Come in!'

Darrell opened the door. 'I've brought the new girls to you, Miss Grayling,' she said.

'Thank you, Darrell,' said the Head. She was sitting at her desk, writing, a grey-haired, calm-faced woman, with startlingly blue eyes and a determined mouth. She looked at the five trembling girls standing in front of her, her blue eyes going from one to the other, considering each girl closely.

What did she see in them? Darrell wondered. Did she see the bad - and the good? Did she see which girls could be trusted and which couldn't? Did she know which of them would accept responsibility and do well in the school, and which would be failures?

Miss Grayling spoke to each girl in her low, clear voice, asking their names and forms. Then she addressed them all gravely. Darrell listened as intently as the youngsters, remembering the words from six years back.

I want you all to listen to me for a minute or two. One day you will leave this school and go out into the world as young women. You should take with you eager minds, kind hearts and a will to help. You should take with you a good understanding of many things and a willingness to accept responsibility, and show yourselves as women to be loved and trusted. All these things you will be able to learn at Malory Towers - if you will.'

She paused, and every girl looked at her intently, listening hard.

'! do not count as our successes those who have won

scholarships and passed exams, though these are good tilings to do. I count as our successes those who learn to l»e good-hearted and kind, sensible and unstable, good, sound women the world can lean on. Our failures are ihose who do not learn these things in the years they are here.'

Darrell wished she could see into the laces of the five listening girls. What were they thinking, these new-comers? Were they making up their minds, as she had once done, that they would each be one of Malory Towers' successes? The five girls hardly breathed as they gazed at Miss Grayling and listened.

'Some of you will find it easy to learn these things, others will find it hard,' went on Miss Grayling. 'But, easy or hard, they must be learned if you are to be happy after you leave here, and if you are to bring happiness to others.'

Miss Grayling stopped. She looked across at Darrell, who was listening with as much attention as the youngsters.

'Darrell,' said Miss Grayling. 'Do you remember my saying these words to you, when you first came here?'

'Yes, Miss Grayling,' said Darrell. 'And you said something else too. You said, "You will all get a tremendous lot out of your time at Malory Towers. See that you give a lot back."'

'I did say that,' said Miss Grayling. 'And now I must add to il. Girls, six years ago I said those words to Darrell. She is one who has got a great deal out of her time here - and there is no one who has given more back than Darrell has.'

The five girls looked in awe at Darrell, their head-girl. They couldn't imagine her standing as a twelve-year-old in front of Miss Grayling, hearing those same words. But Miss Grayling remembered very well.

'You must go,' said the Head, pleased with the look of

the live new girls. They were good stuff, she thought - likely to be the heads of forms and captains of games - and possibly head-girls of the future.

Darrell turned to go too. 'Wait a moment, Darrell,' said Miss Grayling. 'Shut the door.'

Darrell shut the door and came back to the desk. She felt herself blushing, she had been so pleased at Miss Grayling's words about her. She looked shyly at the Head.

'You are one of our successes, Darrell,' said Miss Grayling. 'One of our biggest successes. Sally is another, and so is Mary-Lou. I think there is only one sad failure, real failure, in your form. And she has only this one term to change herself. You know who it is I mean.'

'Yes,' said Darrell. 'Gwendoline.'

Miss Grayling sighed. 'You know her perhaps better than I do,' she said. 'Can you do anything with her at all? I have had a most unpleasant interview these holidays with Gwendoline's parents about her future. Her mother wanted one thing, her father another. Her father, of course, is right. But I hear that he has had to give way in the matter. Darrell, if you possibly can, I want you to try and influence Gwendoline so that she will come round to her father's point of view. Otherwise the family will be split in half, and there will be great unhappiness.'

'I'll try,' said Darrell, but so doubtfully that Miss Grayling knew there was little hope of success. 'I know all about it, of course, Miss Grayling - Gwen has seen to that! But it's impossible to move Gwen when she's determined to get her own way.'

'Weil, never mind,' said the Head, smiling suddenly. 'I can put up with twenty Gwens so long as I have a few Sallys and Darrells!'

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Miss Oakes's M

Darrell went out of the room, feeling so proud and pleased that she could have sung out loud. She was one of the successes! She had always longed to be - but she had made mistakes, been unkind sometimes, lost her temper more times than she liked to remember - and had ruefully come to the conclusion that although she wasn't a failure, she wasn't a howling success either.

But Miss Grayling seemed to think she was, so she must be. Darrell held her head high, and went swinging along to the sixth-form classroom. She opened the door and went in quietly.

'I'm sorry I'm late, Miss Oakes,' she said. 'I took the new girls to Miss Grayling.'

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'Yes, Mary-Lou told me,' said Miss Oakes. 'We were just talking about the work this term, Darrell. Those of you who are taking Higher Certificate are to work in one group, taking only a few odd lessons with the rest of the form. You have been working hard for the last two terms, so you should not find this term unduly hard - but you will have to keep at it!' Darrell nodded. She badly wanted to pass the Higher well.

She felt sure Sally would. As for Alicia and Betty, their quick brains and excellent memories would make success certain. She glanced round at the other girls from the other- Towers, who would also be taking Higher. Yes - they w on Id probably all pass. They were a keen, hard- w i) i king lot.

'I'm glad I'm no! taking Higher,' said Gwen. 'Anyway,

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I suppose I could always lake it at my school in Switzerland, couldn't I, Miss Oakes?'

Miss Oakes was not interested in Gwen's future school, any more than she was interested in Gwen.

'You are not up to Higher standard, whatever school you happen to be in,' she said coldly, i can only hope that you will work a little better this term than you have worked for the last two terms, Gwendoline. Would it be loo difficult to leave me with a little better impression of your capabilities than I have at present?'

Gwen squirmed. She looked round at Maureen for sympathy. She got none, for Maureen always delighted in seeing Gwen made uncomfortable. The others looked studiously into the distance, determined not to catch Gwen's eye or give her any chance ol speaking about her future school. They felt certain they were going to get very very tired ol hearing about it.



'Amanda, I understand that you were going to work for Higher, if your old school had not been destroyed,' said Miss Oakes, turning to the hefty, solid new girl. 'Do you wish to do so here? I hear that it has been left to you to decide, as you can take it next year if you want to?'

'I don't want to take it this term, thank you,' said Amanda. 'It would be muddling, having had the work with different teachers. I shouldn't do myself justice. I intend to work at my games instead. I hope to be chosen for the Olympic Games next year, anyway.'

Only the North Tower girls had heard this bit of news so far. The girls from other Towers gaped at Amanda's forthright assertion. Go in for the Olympic Games! She must either be mad, or else alarmingly good at games!

'Ah yes,' said Miss Oakes, calmly. 'I forgot you came from Trenigan Towers. Well, Amanda, you will find that the games side is very good here, fortunately for you - and very well run.'

Amanda looked disbelieving, but didn't say anything.

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It was, however, quite apparent to everyone that she was busy turning up her rather big nose at the games she might expect at Malory Towers. Sally felt annoyed and half-amused. Moira felt angry. She glared at Amanda, making up her mind to take her down a few pegs as quickly as possible!

And if she tries to interfere, I'll soon show that I don't stand any nonsense, even if Sally does! thought Moira, scowling so fiercely at her thoughts that Belinda's hand went instinctively into her desk for her sketch-book - the one the girls called her Scowl Book. It had a most wonderful

collection of scowls - though the finest were undoubtedly Gwen's!

How Gwen wished she could get hold of that horrible hook of Belinda's! But Belinda guarded it jealously and had such a fine hiding-place for it when she took it out of her desk that Gwen had never been able to make out where it was.

'No, Belinda,' said Miss Oakes, who had already learned to recognize the Scowl Book when she saw it. 'We will have no Scowl Sketches in this session, please. And, Irene, could you stop tapping out that tune, whatever it is, on your desk?'

'Oh, sorry,' said Irene, stopping the tapping at once. 'I just can't help it when a new tune comes into my head. It's the way the wind blows in those trees over there, Miss Oakes - shusha, shusha, shusha - like that, it goes. And it made me . . .'

'You're tapping again, Irene,' said Miss Oakes, impatiently. She was never quite certain if Irene really did get as lost in her 'tunes' as she said she did, or if she attempted like this to make a diversion and cause laughter.

But Irene was quite serious about it. She lived half in a world of music and half in the world of ordinary things and when one world clashed with the other, she was lost. She was quite capable of writing out a line in

French instead of a word of French - and quite capable, too, of handing it in! Mam'zelle had often been amazed to find herself staring at pages of music notes, instead of lists of French verbs.

The French girl, Suzanne, had sat with her eyes half-closed through the talk so far. Miss Oakes spoke to her suddenly and made her jump.

'Suzanne! Are you listening?'

'Police?' said Suzanne. Miss Oakes looked surprised.

'She means "Please?"' said Darrell, with a laugh. 'She keeps saying "Police?" whenever she doesn't understand anything. Don't you, Suzanne?'

'Police?' said Suzanne, not understanding a word. 'Police, Darrell, je ne cotnprends pas. I not unnerstand!'

'Well, Suzanne, you will have to listen with your ears and eyes open,' said Miss Oakes, 'or you will not learn a word of English vvlmie you are hete. I understand that is why you have come - to learn to speak English fluently?'

'Police?' repeated Suzanne, again, her black eyes very wide open. 'I spik him bad.'

'What does she mean?' said Miss Oakes.

'She means she speaks English badly,' said Sally.

'She must have special coaching then,' said Miss Oakes, firmly.

'No, no. I not want zat,' said Suzanne, equally firmly.

'Ah - so you understood what I said then.' said Miss Oakes, beginning to be suspicious oi this innocent- looking Suzanne.

'Police?' said Suzanne again, and Miss Oakes gave it up. Sire privately resolved to have a few words with Mam'zelle Rougier about her seemingly stupid niece. She began to give out instructions regarding the work to be done that

term, what hooks were to be used, and what work was to be done by the girls on their own.

i like old Oakey, said Darrell, ai break. 'But I've often \v ished she had more sense ol humour. She never, never,

never sees a joke. But she always suspects there may be somebody leading her up the garden path.'

'Yes. Like Irene and her tunes,' said Belinda, 'and actually Irene is perfectly serious about them. Look at her now - shusha, shush, shusha, shush, over by the window, with her eyes glued on the trees.'

Alicia grinned wickedly. She went up to Irene and tapped her on the shoulder. 'I say, Irene - can I play- trains too? Shush, shusha, shush, shusha - come on, let's play trains.'

And before the surprised Irene knew what was happening, half the sixth-formers had formed a line and were playing 'trains' behind Irene, chuffing like engines.

Amanda watched disdainfully. What a school! she thought. Now if she were at Trenigan Towers, everyone would be out practising tennis strokes or something!

'Hold it Amanda, hold it1' said Belinda, suddenly, spotting the unpleasant look on Amanda's large face. She had whipped out her Scowl Book, and was busy trawing. Amanda had no idea what she was doing. She was so new that she didn't even realize that Belinda could draw.

She saw in horror that Belinda had caught her face and expression exactly. She snatched at the book but Belinda dodged out of the way.

'It didn't look like that,' said Amanda, enraged. 'I just stood there thinking that if I were at my old school, we wouldn't be playing the fool like this, but out in the open air, practising strokes at tennis, or something sensible.'

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'Really?' said Moira, coldly. 'I suppose it has escaped your notice that at the moment it is pelting with rain?'

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Actually Amanda hadn't noticed. She had been too busy scorning the others at their tooling. She turned away, after giving Moira a most unpleasant look which Moira fully returned. Darrell thought there wasn't a pin to choose between the two looks!

Amanda turned off to the corner where the radio stood. She began to fiddle about with it and eventually managed to find a recording of some sporting event. The commentator was very excited, and his voice came loudly through the common-room, where the girls were having their break.

Nobody quite liked to tell her to turn it down a bit. Darrell nudged Sally and nodded to the window. It had stopped raining. Sally grinned.

She and Darrell made signs to the others to creep out of the room without disturbing Amanda. One by one they tiptoed out, and Darrell softly closed the door. They rushed to the

cloakroom, found their lockers, slipped on tennis shoes, snatched up their rackets and ran out to the courts.

'Let's hope she sees us!' panted Moira.

Amanda did. The recording came to an end and she switched off the radio. She was immediately struck by the quiet in the room, and swung round. It was empty. She heard the sound of voices outside, and the thud of tennis balls being struck, and went to the window. She scowled down. Beasts! They were just doing all that to annoy her!

The girls came back, laughing, when the bell went. 'Pity you didn't feel like a practice, Amanda!' called Moira. 'Never mind - better luck next time!'

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As usual the girls settled down very quickly for the new term. The summer term; was always such a lovely one. There were so many things to do - and for those who liked swimming, the magnificent pool that lay in a great hollow of a rock down below on the shore was a source of the greatest delight.

Those who wished could go to swim before breakfast, and every morning, once the pool had been declared warm enough for swimming, girls ran down the steep cliff-path to the swimming-pool. They wore their swimming-costumes with a wrap round them.

Most of the girls loved the pool. A few didn't. Those who hadn't learned to swim were afraid. Those who didn't like cold water hated the pool. Gwen, of course, was one of these, and so was Maureen.

The new French girl also hated the very idea of the pool. She went to watch the girls there once, and squealed in fright if a splash of water so much as reached her toes!

'Suzanne! Don't be an idiot!' said Miss Potts, who happened to be in charge of the swimming that day. 'Don't squeal like a silly first-former! I shall make you strip off your clothes and go in. I can't think why Mam'zelle isn't make you.'

Mam'zelle, of course, never would make anyone go to the pool if they didn't want to. She detested it herself, and so did the second trench teacher, Mam'zelle

Miss Potts, Suzanne's aunt. Neither of them understood the craze for games and sports of all kinds that they found in English schools.

'I go back,' announced Suzanne, at the next splash, and she turned to go up the sloping way to the cliff on which the school was built.

'Oh no, you don't,' said Miss Potts. 'You stay here. Even if you can't be persuaded to learn to swim, you can watch the others!'

'Police?' said Suzanne, with a blank expression on her face. Miss Potts wished fervently she had Suzanne in the first form under her for just one day. She was quite certain that Suzanne would never utter that infuriating word again!

Gwendoline and Maureen were made to swim, of course, though it still took them ages to make up their minds to get into the cold, clear water. They waited till everyone else was in, because it was simply extraordinary how many accidental pushes happened to them when Alicia or Moira or Betty came by. If there was one thing Gwen hated it was to enter the pool suddenly without warning!

The pool was always beautiful on blue sunny days. It shone a deeper blue than the sky, and after a few weeks of summer got really deliriously warm - till the tide came in, swamped the pool, and left cooler water there! Darrell loved the pool. Even when she was not swimming she used to take her books down beside it and dream there, looking over the brilliant blue water.

Moirra was a very good swimmer. So was Sally. Darrell always had been. But the new girl, Amanda, surpassed them all!

She was a most magnificent swimmer. The first time she entered the water, everyone gasped. She streaked across the pool with the most powerful over-arm stroke the girls had ever seen.

'Gosh - what a swimmer!' said Darrell. T never saw anything like it. She is good enough for the Olympic Games. She could beat us hollow, Sally.'

Amanda was not content with the pool, big and deep though it was. She looked out to sea. 'I shall go and swim in the sea,' she said.

'You're not allowed to,' said Darrell, who was nearby, drying herself. 'There's a very dangerous current out there at high tide.'

'Currents aren't dangerous to a strong swimmer like me,' said Amanda, and flexed her arms to show Darrell her enormous muscles. She had great strong legs too. She was heavy in her walk, and not at all graceful in ordinary life - hut when she was playing games or swimming, she had the strong grace of some big animal, and was most fascinating to watch. The lower forms gaped at her, and often came down to the pool when the word went round that Amanda was there - just to stand and stare!



'Would you like to give some of these youngsters a bit of coaching, Amanda?' Sally said one day. As head of school games, she was always on the look-out for likely youngsters to coach.

'T might.,' said Amanda, looking bored. 'So long as it's not a waste of my time.'

'Oh well, if you feel like thatV said Moira indignantly. She was nearby, listening. Moira was not very likeable, hut at least she did try to help the lower forms in their games., and was a great help to Sally.

'We never had to bother with the young ones at rrenigan Towers,' said Amanda, drying herself so vigorously that her skin came up bright red. 'We had plenty of coaches there. They looked after the youngsters. Vou seem to have too few games mistresses here.'

Darrell fumed inwardly at this criticism of Malory lowers. There were plenty of teachers tor everything! Iust because Malory Towers didn't make a religion ol

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spoil as Trenigan had, this great lump ol an Amanda dared to look down her nose at it!

Sally saw Darrell's laee, and nudged her. It's no good saying anything,' she said, as Amanda walked oil. 'She's so thick-skinned, and so sure ol hersell and her luture, that nothing we tan say will make any impression. She must have been very upset when Trenigan went up in smoke - and she probably hates Malory Towers because it's new to her, and doesn't go in lor ihe sport she adores as much as she'd like it to!'

'She's jolly lucky to conic here,' snorted Darrell, still looking furious. Sally laughed, it was a long lime since she had seen Darrell near to losing her lamous temper. Once upon a time Darrell had lost her temper practically every term and had shocked the school by her rages - but now it very seldom showed, lor Darrell had it well undei control.

'Don't let her get under your skin,' said Sally. 'Believe me, she's much more likely to get under mine! She's infuriating over tennis - doesn't seem to think it's worth while even to have a game with us! She's got under Moira's skin all right - there'll be high words there soon.'

The second-formers came running down to the pool for their swim. The bigger girls heard the soft thud-tluid of the rubber-shoed feet coming along, and turned. There was a yell trom Felicity.

'Hallo, Darrell! Had a swim? What's the water like? Doesn't it look heavenly?'

'Wizard,' said Susan, her friend, and tried il with her toe as soon as she had taken oil her shoes. 'Gosh, it's warming up already. Buck up, Felicity. The sooner we're in, the longer we'll have!'

Darrell had a lew minutes to spare, and she stayed with Sally and Moira to watch the younger ones. Now that Darrell was so soon leaving, she leit an intense desire to make sure that there were others who would

carry on worthily the gro.it traditions ol Malory Towers - and in particular she wanted to be sure that Felicity, hei Nister, would

She watched Felicity with pride. She and Susan dived n  
>]uickl\, and with strong, graceiul strokes swam across :he

great pool and hack.

'That sistei ol yours is coming on,' said Moira to Darrell. 'She was good last year -- she's going to be even [better this. I think if she improves her hack stroke, we might try her in one of the teams.'

'I hope so,' said Darrell, longing for Felicity to shine. Susan's good too - but not nearly so fast. Hallo - who's 'his porpoise'?

A fat and ungainly girl stood shivering on the brink of the pool. She was yelled at by some of the second-year swimmers already in the water.

'Get in, you! Come on. Fatty! If you don't hurry up, you'll have exactly two minutes in the water, and that's all!'

Even two minutes was too much for the fat and cowardly Jo. Bumptious and brazen in everything else, he was a coward over cold water. He had begged his father to get her excused from swimming, and he had urged Miss Grayling and informed her that he didn't wish his daughter Jo to go in for swimming if she didn't want to.

'Why not?' asked Miss Grayling, coldly. 'Has the doctor forbidden it for her?'

'No. But I have,' said the loud-voiced Mr Jones, bellowing down the telephone. 'That's good enough,

isn't it?'

'I'm afraid not,' said Miss Grayling, in her firm, incisive voice. 'Girls sent to Malory Towers follow the ordinary routine of the school, unless it is against the doctor's orders. There is nothing

wrong about swimming '01 fo - she is merely alraid of cold water, so the games rcss tells me. I think you will agree with me ihat

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Josephine should conquer the cold water rather than that the cold water should defeat Josephine?'

Mr Jones had been about to say that he had always detested cold water, and he didn't see why Jo shouldn't do what he had done, and not go near it; but he suddenly thought better of it. There was something in Miss Grayling's cool voice that warned him. He put down the telephone abruptly. Miss Grayling might find there was no room for Jo at Malory Towers, if he persisted!

And so Jo, to her annoyance and surprise, had been told by her father that she'd got to put up with the swimming and get on with it. Every day she had to come down to the pool and shiver in dread on the brink, till she was inevitably pushed in or dragged in by a scornful second-former. Even the first-formers had been known to push Jo in!

Today it was Felicity who crept up behind, gave Jo an enormous shove, and landed her in the pool with a colossal splash! Jo came up, gasping and spluttering, furiously angry. When she had got the water out of her mouth, she turned on the laughing Felicity.

'You beast! That's the second time you've done that. Just you wait, I'll pay you out. You're as bad as your father!'

'What's my father done?' asked Felicity, amused.

'He was rude to mine,' said Jo. 'About pushing your car into the hedge. I heard him!'

'Oh well - he pushed our car into the hedge - and now I've pushed you into the water!' cried Felicity. 'Tit for tat! We're quits! Look out - I'm coming to duck you!'

She dived under the water to get Jo's legs. Jo screamed and kicked. Her legs slid away from her and she disappeared under the water again. She came up, furious. She struggled to the side and called to Sally.

'Sally! Can't you stop Felicity playing the fool in the water? She's always going for my legs.'

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'Learn to swim then,' said Sally. 'Get some coaching! You always slip out of any coaching. Look out - here comes somebody else after your legs!'

Poor Jo! However much she swaggered and boasted and blew her own trumpet out of the water, she was of less account than the youngest first-former when she was in the pool!

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Darrell hoped that her last term would go very very slowly. So did Sally.

'I want to hold on to every moment, this last term,' said Darrell. 'I know quite well we'll have a wonderful time at St Andrews, when we leave here - but I do so love Malory Towers, and I want the time to go as slowly as possible, I want to go away remembering every detail of it. I never want to forget.'

'Well, we shall remember all the things we want to remember,' said Sally. 'We shall remember all the tricks we've ever played on Mam'zelle, for instance - every single one! We shall remember how the pool looks on a sunny day - and how the sea looks from the classroom windows - and what it sounds like when the girls pour out of school at the end of the morning.'

'And you'll remember dear Gwen and her ways,' said Alicia, who was nearby. 'You'll never forget those!'

'Oh, Gwen,' said Darrell, exasperated at the thought of her. 'I wouldn't mind forgetting every single thing about her. She's spoiling our last term with her silly behaviour!'

Gwen really was being very trying. She had never liked Malory Towers, because she had never fitted in with its ideas and ideals. She was spoiled, selfish and silly, and yet thought herself a most attractive and desirable person. The only other girl in the form at all like her. Maureen, she detested. She could see that Maureen was like her in many many ways, and she didn't like seeing herself so often in a girl she disliked.

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Gwen never stopped talking about her next and last school. 'It's in Switzerland, you know,' she said a hundred times. 'The best school there. It's called a finishing school, and is very very select.'

'Well, I hope it will finish you oil properly,' said Alicia. 'It's time something put an end to you!'

'That's not lunny, Alicia,' said Gwen, looking dignified. "Very first-iormish.'

'You always make me leel first-lormish,' said Alicia. I think of silly things like putting out my tongue and saying "Yah!" when you start talking about your idiotic school. Why you couldn't have gone this term, and left us io enjoy our last term in peace, I simply can't imagine.'

'I had an awful fight to go,' said Gwen, and the others groaned. They had already heard far too often about Gwen's 'fight'. Each time she told them, she related worse and worse things that she had said to her lather

I bet she didn't say half those things,' said Alicia to Darrell. 'No father would stand it - and Mr Lacey has put Gwen in her place plenty of times before!'

However, it was true that Gwen had said some very cruel things to her lather during the last holidays, backed up by her mother. Mrs Lacey had been so set on sending Gwen to a linishing school where she could 'make nice inends', that she had used every single means in her power to hack Gwen up.

Tears and more tears. Reproaches. Sulks. Cruel words. Mrs Lacey had brought them all out, and Gwen added to ;hem. The old governess, Miss Winter, who adored Gwen and thought the world of Mrs Lacey, had been shocked.

Gwen related it all to her unwilling listeners. 'Miss Winter was an idiot. All site could say was. "Your lather is tired, Gwendoline. He's not been well lor some time. Don't you

think it would be better not to worry him so much?" She's silly and weak - always has been.'

'Shut up,' said Sally. 'I'd hate to treat my father like that.'

'I said to my father, "Aren't I your only daughter? Do you grudge me one more year's happiness?"' went on Gwen, throwing herself into the part with all her heart. 'I said, "You don't love me. You never did! If you did, you would let me have this one small thing I want - that Mother wants too.'"

'I said, shut up,' said Sally, again. 'We don't want to hear this. It doesn't reflect any credit on you, Gwen. It's beastly.'

'Oh, you're rather a prig, Sally, aren't you?' said Gwen, with her little affected laugh. 'Anyway, you wouldn't have the courage to stand up to your father, for sure.'

'You don't have to "stand up" to your parents if you pull together,' said Sally, shortly.

'Do go on, Gwen,' said Maureen, from the corner of the room. 'It's so interesting. You sound so grown-up!'

Gwen was surprised at this tribute from Maureen, but very pleased. She didn't see that Maureen was encouraging her to go on simply so that she might make herself a nuisance and a bore to everyone. Maureen could see how disgusted the others were. She was rather disgusted herself. Although she was very like Gwen, she did at least love her parents.

Let Gwen go on and on! she thought. Horrid creature! She's showing herself up properly!



And so Gwen went on, talking to Maureen, repeating the unkind things she had said to her father, exulting in the victory she had won over him.

'I went on till I got my way,' she said. 'I stayed in bed one whole day and Mother told him I'd be really ill if I went on like that. So Daddy came upstairs and said, "Very well. You can have your way. You're right and I'm wrong. You can go to Switzerland to school."'

Nobody believed that her father had said this. Nobody said anything at all except Maureen.

'What a victory, Gwendoline,' she said. 'I bet you were all over your father after that.'

'I would have been if he'd have let me,' said Gwen, looking a little puzzled. 'But he went all grieved and sad, and hardly spoke to any of us. Except sometimes to Miss Winter. He was putting it on, of course, to make me feel awful. But I didn't. Two can play at that game, I thought, so I went cool too. I hardly even said good-bye to him when he drove the car away at the beginning of term. You've got to stand up to your parents when you get to our age!'

Darrell stood up suddenly. She felt really sick. She thought of her own father, Mr Rivers - kindly, hard-working surgeon, devoted to his wife and two daughters. How would he feel if she, Darrell, suddenly 'stood up' to him, and spoke cruel words, as Gwen had to her father?

He'd be heart-broken! thought Darrell. And I'm sure Mr Lacey felt the same. I expect he loves Gwen, even if she is beastly and selfish. How could she behave like that?

She spoke to Gwen, and the tone of her voice made everyone look up.

'Gwen, I'd like a few words with you,' said Darrell. 'Come on up to my study, will you?'

Gwen was surprised. What did Darrell want with her? She felt like refusing, and then got up. She was rather afraid of the forthright Darrell.

Darrell led the way to her study. She had remembered Miss Grayling's words. Could she possibly say something now, this very minute, to influence Gwen, and show her where she had gone wrong? Darrell felt that she might. She felt so strongly about the matter that she was certain she could make Gwen see her point.

'Sit down in that arm-chair, Gwen,' said Darrell.

I want to say something to you.'

'I hope you're not going to preach at me.' said Gwen.

You've got on that kind of face.'

'Well, I'm not going to preach,' said Darrell, hoping that she wasn't. 'Look here, Gwen - I can't help feeling terribly sorry for your father about all this.'

Gwen was amazed. 'Sorry for my father? Why? What's it to do with you, anyway?'

'Well, you've told us so often about this family row of yours, that I, for one, can't help feeling that it is something to do with me now,' said Darrell. 'I mean. - you've made me share in all that bickering and rows and upsets, and I feel almost as if I've been a spectator.'

Gwen was silent for once. Darrell went on.

'I'm not going to say a word about who's right or who's wrong, Gwen,' said Darrell, earnestly. 'I'm not going to criticize anyone. I just say this. From what you've told me you've made that nice lather of yours miserable. You've got what you want at the expense of someone else's peace of mind.'

'I've got to stand on my own feet, haven't I?' muttered Gwen.

'Not if you stamp on someone else's toes to do it,' said Darrell, warming up. 'Don't you love your father, Gwen? I couldn't possibly treat mine as you've treated yours. It you did say all those cruel things to yours, then you ought to say you're sorry.'

'I'm not sorry I said them,' said Gwen, in a hard voice. 'My father's often said unkind things to me.'

'Well, von deserved them,' said Darrell, beginning to lose patience. 'He doesn't. I've met him plenty of times and I think he's a dear. You don't deserve a father like that!'

'You said you weren't going to preach,' said Gwen, scornfully. 'How long are you going on like this?'

Darrell looked at Gwen's silly, weak face and marvelled that such a weak person could be so hard and unyielding. She tried once again, though she now felt sure that it was no use. Nobody in this world could make an impression on Gwen!

'Gwen,' she began. 'Yon said that your lather said he couldn't afford to send you to Switzerland. If so, he'll have to go short of something himself, to let you go.'

'He was wrong when he said he couldn't afford it,' said Gwen. 'Mother said he could. He was just saying that as an excuse not to let me go. He was horrid about the whole thing. He said - he said - that I was s-s-silly enough without being made s-s-sillier, and that a good j-j-job would shake me out of a lot of n-n-nonsense!'

Stuttering with self-pity, Gwen now dissolved into tears. Darrell looked at her in despair.

'Couldn't you possibly go to your father and say - that you're sorry, you'll call the whole thing off, and do what he wants you to do, and get a job?' she asked, in her forthright way. It all seemed so simple to Darrell.

Gwen began to sob. 'You don't understand. I couldn't possibly do a thing like that. I'm not going to humble myself. Daddy would crow over me like anything. I'm I/W I've made him miserable - it'll teach him a lesson!' mused Gwen, so maliciously that Darrell started to her feet.

'You're horrible, Gwen! You don't love your father or anyone else. You only love yourself. You're horrible!'

She went out of the room, and made her way straight into Miss Grayling's room. She had failed utterly and absolutely with Gwen. If Miss Grayling wanted to influence her she must try herself. It was beyond Darrell!

She told Miss Grayling everything. The Head Mistress listened gravely. 'Thank you, Darrell,' she said. 'You did your best, and it was well done. One day Gwen will meet her punishment, and it will, alas, be a terrible one.'

'What do you mean?' said Darrell, half scared by the foreboding tone in Miss Grayling's voice.

I only mean that when someone does a grievous \ rong and glories in it instead of being sorry, then that '·< 'son must expect a terrible lesson,' said Miss Giavling

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'Somewhere in her life, punishment is awaiting Gwen. I don't know what it is, but inevitably it will come. Thank you, Darrell. You did your best.'

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Darrell would not let Gwen and her obstinacy spoil more ihan a day of her precious last term! She brooded over ihe interview in her study for a few hours, wishing she could have done better with Gwen - and then [Hit it right out of her mind.

i know I can't do anything more, so what's the good ol worrying about it? she thought, sensibly. She turned her

thoughts to more interesting things - tennis matches  
swimming matches - half-term, when her parents came down  
- and she also thought about a secret that Felicity had  
giggled out to her the day before.

'Oh, Darrell. Do listen! Susan's heard of a lovely trick from  
June. It's so simple, and so safe.'

Darrell grinned. It was good being high tip in school, and an  
important member of the sixth form - but it did mean that  
tricks and jokes were no longer possible or permissible. It  
just wasn't done in the sixth, to play a trick on any mistress.  
The mere thought of playing one on the dignified, scholarly  
Miss Oakes was impossible.

But there was no reason why the younger ones shouldn't  
have their bit of fun, as they had in Darrell's own time. So  
Darrell grinned and listened, as Felicity poured out her bit of  
news in a secluded corner of the garden.

'June's getting a magnet,' she said. 'It's a very special one,  
treated in a special way to make it frightfully powerful. It's  
very small too, June says - small enough to be hidden in the  
palm of your hand.'

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'Well? What do you intend to do with it?' asked Darrell.  
There didn't seem to be great possibilities in such an  
ordinary thing as a magnet.

Felicity began to giggle again. 'Well, you just listen, Darrell.'  
she said. 'You know how the two Mam'zelles wear their hair,  
don't you - in little buns?'

Darrell nodded, puzzled. She couldn't for the life of her see  
what buns of hair and a magnet had to do with each other.

'Mam'zelle Rougier has hers at the back, and Mam'zelle Dupont has hers near the top of her head,' said Felicity. 'And they both stick their buns full of hair-pins.'

Darrell stared at her young sister, and a light began to dawn. 'You don't mean - oh, to say, Felicity - you wouldn't dare to hold the magnet near either of the Mam'zelles' heads and make the hair-pins come out!' she said.

Felicity nodded, her eyes dancing. 'Yes. That's the idea,' she said. 'Oh, Darrell! Isn't it smashing? It's super.'

Darrell began to laugh. 'It's wonderful!' she said. 'Fancy us never thinking of such a simple trick as that. Felicity, when are you going to do it? Oh, I wish I could see it! I wish I could do it myself!'

'You can't. You're head-girl,' said Felicity, sounding quite shocked. 'But you could make some excuse, couldn't you, to come and see us play the trick? We thought we'd do it on Mam'zelle Dupont and on Mam'zelle Rougier just as many times as they'd stand for it, without getting suspicious.'

'I should think they'd jolly soon get suspicious,' said Darrell. 'Especially Mam'zelle Rougier. You'd better be careful of her, Felicity. She's not got the sense of humour that Mam'zelle Dupont has.'

'We'll be careful,' said Felicity. 'Well - can you make an excuse to pop into our classroom, if we tell you when

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we're going to do the trick?'

'I'll try,' said Darrell. But she felt sure she wouldn't be able to. Mam'zelle might be rather astonished if she kept

appearing in the second-form room every time her hair-pins came out!

Darrell told the rest of the form, with the exception of Gwen and Maureen, whom nobody ever trusted enough to let into even the simplest secret. Amanda was there too, and to everyone's surprise, she suddenly guffawed. Like her voice, her laugh was very loud, and it made everyone jump. They hadn't heard the stuck-up Amanda laugh before - she was too busy looking down her nose at everything!

'That's great,' said Amanda. 'We did things like that at Trenigan, too.'

'Did you?' said Darrell, in surprise, and Trenigan went a little way up in her rather low estimation of it. 'What tricks did you play?'

For the first time Amanda opened out a little, and an animated conversation began about tricks - good ones and bad ones, safe ones and dangerous ones, ones likely to be too easily spotted, and ones that never were spotted. It was a most interesting conversation.

Amanda had to admit that Malory Towers was better at tricks than Trenigan had been.

Oh well - it's because of Alicia, really, that we got such fine tricks,' said Sally. 'Alicia's got three brothers, and one of them, Sam, always used to send her good tricks he used himself. Alicia - do you remember the sneezing trick?'

'Oh yes,' said Alicia. 'It was a tiny pellet, Amanda, which we stuck somewhere near Mam'zelle - on the wall or anywhere, it didn't matter - and when you put a few drops of salt water on it, it sent off an invisible vapour that made people sneeze - and you should have heard Mam'zelle sneeze!'



'A-WHOOOOOOOSH-OOO!' said Sally, suddenly, and everyone jumped. Sally grinned. 'Just like that,' she said. 'And poor old Mam'zelle went on and on and on, till she was scared out of her life.'

'Oh dear - how we laughed. I envy those lower-form kids,' said Alicia, putting on a comical look. 'No dignity to keep up, no responsibilities like ours, no necessity to set an example to the whole school. And that wonderful magnet trick to play!'

'Your young cousin June is certainly keeping up the family tradition,' said Mary-Lou. 'When are they going to do this absurd trick?'

It was fixed for a Thursday morning, at the end of the French lesson. This was the last lesson before break and after it the girls would be able to go out into the Court and laugh their heads off, if they needed to!

'Who takes the lesson? Mam'zelle Dupont or Mam'zelle Rougier?' asked Darrell, hoping it was the plump, jolly Mam'zelle Dupont.

But it wasn't. It was the thin, rather bad-tempered Mam'zelle Rougier. What in the world would she think when her hair fell down and her pins disappeared?

The second-formers planned it all carefully. They decided that June must not play the trick. All the teachers were suspicious of her. Somebody else must do the trick.

'Shall I?' said Felicity. 'Or what about Susan? Susan's always so good in class that nobody would ever suspect her of such a thing.'

'I'm not always good,' said Susan, quite hurt at this compliment. 'Anyway, I don't want to do the trick. I giggle too easily.'

'Nobody must laugh,' warned June. 'Once we laugh we shall be suspected, and we shan't be able to play the trick again.'

'But how can we NOT laugh?' asked Nora, who was given to sudden snorts, like Irene's. 'I mean - laughing is like sneezing or coughing. You can't stop it coming, if it wants to.'

'Yes, you can,' said June, firmly. She had wonderful control over herself, and could keep a straight face during the most comical happenings. 'If you feel you are going to give the game away, you'd better go out of the room just before we do the trick. See?'

'Oh, I couldn't. I simply couldn't miss it,' said Nora, 'I won't laugh. I'll take three or four hankies and stuff them into my mouth.'

Thursday came. Lessons began. The French lesson came, and Mam'zelle Rougier walked into the room, her heavy tread sounding all the way down the corridor. June was holding open the door. A little snort came from Nora, whose pockets were bulging with handkerchiefs.

'Shut up!' said several people, in loud whispers. Nora looked round, ready to snort again, but met such fierce glares that she subsided.

Mam'zelle Rougier came in. 'Asseyez-vous,' she said, in her sharp, crisp voice. The class obeyed, sitting down with much scraping of chairs. They looked at Mam'zelle Rougier, suspiciously bright-eyed.

But Mam'zelle Rougier was used to facing dozens of fright, laughing eyes. She snapped out her instructions. Page thirty-three. 'I hope you have prepared the lesson well.' She repeated it slowly in French. 'Nora, please begin.'

Nora was bad at French. She suddenly lost all desire to laugh, and stood up, stammering through the French translation. One by one the others followed. Mam'zelle Rougier was in a bad temper. Words of anger came from her more readily than words of praise that morning! The class felt very pleased she was going to have a trick played on her!

Just before the end of the lesson, Mam'zelle gave her 'final order. Clean the blackboard, please.'

Susan stood up. She had the powerful little magnet inside the palm of her hand. It had already been tried out on many things, with most miraculous results.

Susan walked steadily to the board near Mam'zelle. Mam'zelle had opened her desk and was rummaging in it for a book, it was a wonderful chance to use the magnet at once!

Watched by twenty-three breathless second-formers, Susan held the magnet to the back of Mam'zelle's head. She held it about two inches away from the bun of hair on Mam'zelle's neck, as she had been instructed.

Before her delighted eyes, every one of the rather large hair-pins that Mam'zelle Rougier used for her bun flew out, and attached themselves firmly and silently to the magnet. Susan grinned at the class, went abruptly to the blackboard and cleaned it.

Mam'zelle had apparently noticed nothing. The bell went, and she stood up. 'Dismiss!' she said, and the class

dismissed, Nora stuffing one of her handkerchiefs into her mouth already. They went to the big hall to get biscuits and milk, watching for Mam'zelle to come too.

She came - and the second-formers gave a squeal of joy. 'It's coming down. The bun's all undone!'

So it was. Mam'zelle hadn't noticed it - but Miss Peters saw it at once. She tapped Mam'zelle on the shoulder and spoke to her. 'Your hair is coming down, Mam'zelle,' she said.

Mam'zelle put up her hand, and to her immense astonishment found that her bun was completely undone and hanging down her back! She groped about for the hair-pins to pin it up again.

There wasn't a single hair-pin in her head! This was not surprising, as they were all on the magnet, which Susan now had safely in her pocket! Mam'zelle Rougier felt frantically all over her head, and Nora gave a muffled snort. She stuffed her second hankv in her mouth.

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Mam'zelle now began to feel down her neck, wondering if the hair-pins had disappeared down there. Miss Peters looked at her curiously.

'Lost a hair-pin?' she said.

'f have lost them allV said Mam'zelle, filled with alarm and astonishment. She wondered il she could possibliy liave forgotten to do her hair that morning. Had she gone into her classes with her hair down her back? She blushed red at the thought. What must the girls have thought?

She caught sight of the laughing second-formers, and saw Nora stuffing her third hanky into her mouth. She turned hurriedly and almost ran from the hall.

'The girls were laughing! I did come into my classes without pinning up my hair,' said poor Mam'zelle to herself. 'What a thing to do! How could I have forgotten 'o pin it up? I haven't a single pin in my hair!'

She went to her room and did her hair very carefully indeed. She had no suspicion at all that a trick had been played on her. But if she could have seen the wicked little second-formers laughing and rolling on a secluded piece of grass under the trees in the grounds, she would have felt very suspicious indeed!

'When she groped down her neck for the pins that weren't there!' chuckled June. 'And oh. Miss Peters' face when she saw Mam'zelle's hair all down her back. I could have died.'

'Let's do it again,' begged Felicity. 'Do, do let's. It's one of the funniest tricks we've EVER thought of!'

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Darrell was working hard for her exam, and so was Sally. But they played hard too, and somehow found time to attend all the debates, the sing-songs, lectures and meetings that cropped up through the week. It was a happy, busy life, and one that Darrell enjoyed to the full.

She had now been six years at Malory Towers and had learned to work really well, so the exam work did not seem as difficult as she expected. Miss Oakes was pleased with her.

'Already you can work by yourself, Darrell, with just a little guidance,' she said. 'You are ready for college now. There, you will find that students can work as much or as little as they like. It is up to them! But you will always work well, and Sally too - you have the habit now.'

Privately Miss Oakes thought that Darrell and Sally would do much better at college than Alicia or Betty, although these two had quicker brains and better memories than either Sally or Darrell.

Being grown-up, and feeling free for the first time from bells and strict time-tables and endless classes, will go to Alicia's head, and Betty's too, thought Miss Oakes. They won't do a scrap of work at college! They'll be out to dances and parties and meetings the whole time - and in the end solid little Darrell and solid little Sally will

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come away with the honours that Alicia and Betty should find it easy to get - but won't!

At that moment Darrell and Sally were drawing up lists for the first tennis match of the season. Moira was there, giving

excellent advice in her rather domineering way. However, Sally put up with that for the sake of her help. Moira knew what she was talking about when it came to games.

Amanda came up and looked silently over their shoulders. The others ignored her. Moira turned her back on her even more pointedly.

'I think for the third team we'll put in Jeanie Smithers, from the third form,' said Sally. 'She's got a very fine serve, and she's steady. She'll make a good couple with Tessie Loman.'

'Tessie's no good,' remarked Amanda. 'Never will be. Not until she gets rid of her peculiar way of serving. She loses half her power, the way she swings her racket.'

'I bet you don't even know which Tessie is!' said Sally.

'Oh yes, I do,' said Amanda, unexpectedly. 'I sometimes go and watch those babies. You can always pick out the ones with promise.'

'Well, you're cleverer than we are, then,' said Moira. 'It's possible to pick out someone brilliant - and then find it's just a flash in the pan - they're no good at all.'

'I could always pick out the promising ones,' said Amanda, with conviction. 'I could tell you now who to put into the first team - that's easy, of course - and the second, third and fourth teams. But I wouldn't choose either Jeanie or Tessie for the third team. They'll go to pieces.'

The others left annoyed. Why all this interference? How could Amanda, who had only been a few weeks at Malory Towers, possibly know anything about the sports capabilities of all the girls?

'Well, perhaps you'd like to tell us who will be the captain of school games three years hence,' said Moira, sarcastically. 'We're listening hard!'

'Yes, I can tell you,' said Amanda, without the least hesitation. 'If she had some coaching - proper coaching - and stuck to practising every minute she had. there's a kid in the second form who could be games captain of every form she's in, and far and away best at tennis, whatever form she's in.'

The other three turned and stared at Amanda. She sounded so very very certain.

'Who's the kid?' asked Moira, at last, after all three of them had searched their minds in vain for this elusive second-former. Who could it be?

'There you are - you can't even spot her when I've told you she's outstanding, and told you what form she's in,' said Amanda, walking away. 'Why, at Trenigan lowers she would have been spotted the second day she was at school! But you could have a world champion here and never know it!'

'Amanda! Don't go!' ordered Moira. 'Now you've aired your opinions so freely, let's hear a few more. Who's this wonderful second-former?'

'You go and watch them playing, and find out,' said Amanda, in a bored voice. But Moira flew to the door and shut it just as Amanda had opened it to go out. 'No, Amanda,' she said. 'You tell us before you go - or we'll think you're just talking through your hat, and that there isn't any wonderful kid!'

'I don't waste my breath like that,' said Amanda, scornfully. 'And don't glare at me in that way, Moira - you can order the others about as much as you like, and talk to them as if they



were bits of dirt - they're used to it! I'm not., and I won't have it. If there's any talk of that sort to be done, I'll do it!

Sally came to Moira's defence, though secretly she was pleased to find someone who could stand up to the opinionated Moira, and light her on her own level.

'You're a new girl, Amanda,' she said. 'But you seem to forget it. You can't talk to us like that, and you must realize that Moira knows more than you do about our girls, even if I don't!'

'She doesn't,' said Amanda, contemptuously. 'All right. I'll tell you the kid, and you'll see I'm right. It's June.'

'June!' said the other three, amazed. June, the defiant, aggressive, daredevil cousin of Alicia's! Well, who would have thought of June?

'She never bothers even to listen when she's being coached,' said Sally.

'She only plays when she wants to,' said Darrell, 'and more often than not she plays the fool! She's no good.'

'June's always been like that,' said Moira. 'Ever since she's been here - she could run faster at lacrosse and tackle better than anyone if she tried - but we have never been able to put her into a team. She could swim like a fish if she didn't always fool about - she's fast when she wants to be. But you can never depend on June.'

'Look,' said Amanda, with conviction in her voice, 'I tell you, if June was coached properly and soundly, at tennis and swimming - I don't know if she's any good at lacrosse, of course - I tell you that kid would be the finest player and

swimmer you've ever had. Oh, f know she lools about, I know she's a dare-devil and doesn't care a rap for anyone - but my word, once she finds out she can be superlative at something, well - watch her! She'll go lo the top like lightning!'

This was all very surprising - and somehow, spoken in Amanda's loud, very sure voice, it was remarkably convincing. Darrell looked at Sally. Could Amanda be nght? Had their dislike and disapproval ol the cheeky, don't-care June prevented them from seeing that she had the promise of a first-class games-player?

'Well.' said Sally, doubtfully, thinking of June's tennis, and remembering the way she had watched her playing the lool on the court the week before, 'well, I don't know. She's wonderfully quick and supple, and she's very strong - but her character is against her. She won't bother.'

'She just wants someone to take an interest in her and encourage her,' said Amanda. 'I bet it's a case of "give a dog a bad name and hang him", with June. If I had the handling of her, I'd soon make something of her!'

'Well, why don't you?' said Moira, rather dis-agreeably. She had suddenly seen that Amanda was right. June was a natural games-player - she had a wonderful eye, and a beautiful style. She's cheeked me so often that I just couldn't see her good points, thought Moira, grimly. She put her question to Amanda, and stood waiting lor the answei. 'Well, why don't you?'

'Oh, Amanda can't be bothered to coach anyone, can you, Amanda?' said Sally, slyly. She felt sure that by appearing doubtful about Amanda's wish to help she would make the big, aggressive girl volunteer to do so. Clever Sally!

Amanda fell into the trap at once. 'I can be bothered to coach if the person is worth it,' she said, shortly. 'Well, I'm glad you seem to agree with me, anyway. I'll take on June and, what's more, I'll have her in the second tennis team and second swimming team before the term's finished!'

She walked out, shutting the door loudly, in her usual way. The three left in the room looked at one another. Darrell rubbed her nose as she always did when surprised and taken aback.

'Well! She's right, of course. June could be and would be a wonder at games if she wanted to. She's like Alicia - brilliant, but unstable. A wonder so long as she's doing something she wants to do. and something she's

determined to do well - but no good otherwise.'

'/ shouldn't care to take that little wretch of a June on,' said Moira. 'She's rude and ungrateful, and she fools about all the time. I wish Amanda joy of her!'

'She's certainly taken on a handful.' said Sally, picking up her games lists. 'But if she does help June's game, it'll be something! Anyway, thank goodness we've got Felicity to depend on, Darrell. She's going to follow iii your footsteps all right!'

Darrell glowed with pleasure. Yes, Felicity was all light. Felicity would make good - and yet, June would be twice as good as even Felicity, if she only took the · rouble!

'Well - it will be interesting to see what happens,' said Moira. 'Very, very interesting. The confident cocksure Amanda - and the confident cocksure June. My word, how ! do dislike them both!'

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When Amanda had made up her mind to do something, she did it immediately. As soon as she had got outside the door she looked out for a second-former, and she saw Susan.

'Hey, you - what's your name - Susan!' she called. 'Go and find June, tell her I want her, and send her up to my study/

Susan sped off, wondering what June had done. As a rule the second-former^ were only sent for when they needed lecturing about something. She found June and delivered the message.

June was surprised. Amanda, as far as she knew, hadn't even bothered to know her name, though she had seen the big sixth-former watching the lower-form tennis practice and swimming several times. She looked at Susan.

'I'm sure it's not me she wants,' she said. 'It's someone else. Anyway, I haven't done anything wrong - and if somebody was going to tick me off, it wouldn't be Amanda. It would be Sally or Darrell. I'm not going. I don't like Amanda.'

'But you must go/ said Susan, shocked at the idea of June disobeying a sixth-form order. 'Even if it's a mistake, you ought to go and find out.'

'I'm busy/ said June. 'Leave me alone. I'm the one that will get into trouble for not going, not you. But I shan't, don't worry! Amanda meant someone else, not me.'

Susan went off All right - let me disobey Amanda

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il she wanted to. Susan had delivered the message. It was just like June's silly obstinacy. She hated being ordered about by the bigger girls.

Amanda went to her study and waited. She had no real interest in June beyond the tact that she had certainly noted June's decided gift for games. She just wanted to coach her to prove her point. She sat and waited lor the second-former to come.

She waited five minutes, patiently, knowing that it might take Susan a little time to find her. Then, most impatiently, she waited another five minutes. She got up, annoyed,, and went to the door to see if by any chance June was there and had knocked, and she hadn't heard her.

The passage outside was empty. Amanda went to the window and looked. Down in the garden she saw June, walking with two or three others, talking animatedly, she yelled out of the window.

'June! Come here! Didn't Susan give you my message?'

June pretended not to hear. Amanda yelled again. The others nudged June and pointed to the shouting Amanda. June reluctantly detached herself and went under the window.

'Come up to my study at once/ ordered Amanda. I've already been wailing ten minutes and more!

The other second-formers laughed at June's annoyed lace. 'Now you're for it!' called Katherine. 'What have \on been up to, June? You're in for a good old wiggling!'

June couldn't think of anything she had done. She had hated being hauled indoors in front of all the others. >he went in sulkily and stood outside Amanda's door, she knocked sharply. Amanda had expected a soft, reprologetic knock and she jumped.

'Come in,' she said. June went in and shut the door too loudly. She would show Amanda she didn't stand in ■uc of sixth-formers, however high and mighty they thought themselves!

It was not a good beginning for any co-operation between them. Amanda was annoyed, June was cross

'I suppose Susan didn't give you my message?' said Amanda.

'Yes, she did,' said June.

'Then why on earth didn't you come?' demanded Amanda.

'I thought you'd made a mistake,' said June. 'I didn't know you even knew my name.'

'What a feeble excuse!' said Amanda and, indeed, it did sound rather feeble, even to June, as she said it.

June scowled. She waited to hear what she had done wrong. She half expected to see a Punishment Book ready on the table, but there was none. All the sixth-formers had Punishment Books, in which they wrote down any punishment they meted out to lower-formers who had offended in some way. Usually the punishment was lines to learn and repeat.

I wish she'd tell me what I've done, thought June, eyeing Amanda aggressively. Actually Amanda, finding June so exasperating, was debating whether or not to change her mind about offering to coach her. She decided to go on with it. She couldn't bear the idea of Moira sneering at her if she didn't.

'Look here. June,' she began, abruptly. 'I've been watching you.'

June was startled. 'Watching me!' she said, on the defensive at once. 'What for? I'm not aware that I've been worth watching - I've been fairly harmless lately.'

'Don't talk in that silly way/ said Amanda. 'I've been watching you at tennis and swimming. You could be good. In fact you could be better than anyone in the second form or the third form. And if you worked at your games, instead of playing the fool, you'd soon beat anyone in the fourth form too/

June gaped. This was so very extraordinary and unexpected that she couldn't think of a word to say.

Amanda went on.

'So I propose to coach you myself, June. I've told Sally and Darrell and Moira my views about you, and I've said I could make you good enough to put you in the second tennis team and second swimming team before the end of the term. I want to prove that I'm right.'

Still June stared at Amanda, overcome with astonishment. She couldn't understand Amanda picking her out like this. June had no illusions about herself - she knew she could be outstanding if she tried - but it was too much trouble to try! Still, it was very very flattering to be told all this!

'Well?' said Amanda, impatiently. 'Why don't you say something? I propose to begin coaching you right away this afternoon, if possible.'

June hesitated. She was torn between two alternatives. She disliked Amanda, and wanted to throw her offer back in her face, because it had something hard and condescending about it. On the other hand - what lun to lord it over the other second-formers, and tell them that Amanda, from the great sports school, Trenigan Towers, had actually picked her out from all the vulgar lower-formers - and considered it worth while to spend a great deal of time on her!

All right,' said June, at last. 'Did Sally say I could have special coaching from you?'

Amanda gave a snort. 'Don't be silly. And I think you might at least show a spark of gratitude. I'm going to give you a lot of my time to you/

'Well - you're really only doing it to prove yourself right, aren't you ?' said June, with her devastating impersonality. 'Not because you're really interested in me? : don't mind. It suits me, if it suits you!'

Amanda restrained her tongue with an effort, for

wouldn't do to put this cheeky youngster in a hostile mood at the beginning, or there would be no co-operation between them, and no good results. But how- she did dislike her!

'Very well,' said Amanda, crisply. 'We'll have the whole thing on a business basis. I want to prove I'm right, and you want to be in the second school teams. At least, I imagine you do. It would be a tremendous thing for a second-former.'



'All right,' said June, in her maddeningly casual way.

'But there's just one thing you must understand,' said Amanda, 'or the whole thing's off. You have jolly well got to come at the times I set for coaching in swimming and tennis. Got that?'

'That's fair enough,' said June. And so the bargain was struck between them, a cold sort of bargain with no liking in real interest on either side, June went off jauntily. What a shock for the other second-formers to hear her news!

As soon as she appeared in the second-form common-room the others called out to her.

'What was it, June? What did she want you for?'

'How many lines have you got to learn (his time?'

'Did you cheek her? What did you say?'

'She sent for me because she said she wanted to coach me in tennis and swimming,' announced June.

This was so astonishing to the others that they were struck into silence. Felicity gasped.

'Amanda - coaching yew, June! Whatever for?'

'Well, she appears to think I could be in the second tennis team and the second swimming team by the end of the term if I wait to,' said June, airily.

'You couldn't. You always fool about too much,' said Susan at once.

'Right. Amanda appears to think so, I said,' answered June. 'I've no doubt your opinion is more correct, though. Susan.'

'Look - don't be so exasperating,' said Felicity. 'Tell us what really happened.'

'I've told you,' said June. 'Amanda wants to coach me every day, and I've agreed. That's all.'

There was another silence. The second-formers found all very hard to believe. But they knew June was speaking the truth. She always did.

'Well, all I can say is, I wish you joy of being controlled by that awful, loud-voiced creature,' said Susan. 'She'll order you about like anything.'

'She'll have to mind her Ps and Qs,' said June, smoothly, 'I don't take kindly to being ordered about. If she wants to prove she's right, and get me good enough for the second teams, she'll have to go about it the right way.'

'You're a pair,' said Harriet. 'A real pair! I shall come and watch the coaching.'

'I don't want you to,' said June, hastily.

'Oh, but we must,' said Felicity, winking at the others. 'After all - with coaching marvellous enough to push you into the second teams so soon, even we might pick up a few hints.'

'Just a few crumbs from the rich man's table!' giggled Susan. 'Well - what a bit of news!'

V

On the tennis court with the pupils

The news about the special coaching soon flew round the school. The games-mistress looked a little doubtful when she

heard it. Too much special attention devoted to any one lower-former was not really good.

On the other hand, June could be brilliant at games if she was interested enough. Perhaps this offer of Amanda's would really jerk her into working hard at tennis and swimming. If she only worked hard at something it would be a help to her character!

'She's a maddening child/ Miss Parker, the second-form mistress, remarked to Mam'zelle. 'All that ability of hers for practically everything - and she's just not interested enough to take the trouble to shine. Except at making the others laugh.'

'Yes - she is too good at that/ agreed Mam'zelle, who had suffered from this ability of June's far too often.

'She's superlative at playing the donkey/ said Miss Potts, who had had June in the first form. 'She's about the only child I've ever had in my form that I really would have liked to see the back of!'

They laughed. 'Well, if Amanda can make her keep her nose to the grindstone, it will be very interesting,' said Miss Parker. 'We'll see!'

Amanda drew up a most intensive time-table for June. June gasped when she saw it. A time was set aside

every single day for coaching in swimming and in tennis. June wondered whether she should protest or not. No - if Amanda was as much in earnest as all that, all right, June would keep her part of the bargain too.

The coaching began. An interested crowd of first- and second-formers came to watch. Amanda was astonished to see the

crowd, and June didn't like it at all. She didn't want to be laughed at, or barracked all the time.

'What's all this?' said Amanda, waving her hand towards the onlookers sitting round the court on the grass.

They've come to watch us,' said June. 'They would, of course.'

Amanda addressed the crowd at once.

'If you've come to pick up hints, all right, if not, clear off. Anyone who interrupts the coaching, or disturbs it in my way, can think again. I've got my Punishment Book with me as usual.'

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This was greeted by a dead silence, and then, as Amanda turned away, a low and discreet murmur arose. Amanda was decidedly not popular. She was even less popular than the domineering Moira. A few of the girls got up and went away. They had only come to call out sunny things to June. Now that it meant their names -going down in the Punishment Book, there didn't seem much point in staying. June wished fervently that everyone would go. To her great annoyance and surprise she found that she was nervous!

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Amanda began with playing pat-ball, keeping a sharp eye on June's returns and placing. She noted that June used her head as well as her hands. She watched the way she swung her racket right back, and kept her eye on the ball. She looked in every single detail. There really wasn't much that Amanda

didn't know about tennis! She had ii ready played in school-girl championships, and she was t born teacher as well as a born player.

'I say how long's this going on for?' complained

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June at last. 'This pat-ball, I mean.'

There was a ripple of laughter from the onlookers. They sat up, hoping that June would begin to be funny.

Amanda didn't answer. She sent another ball over to June. June pretended to miss it, almost iell over and, by a seemingly miraculous recovery, hit the ball from behind her back, and stood up again. This was the kind of clowning she did superlatively well.

There was a wave of laughter from the watchers. 'Go it, June!' called Harriet.

Amanda caught the ball in her hand and swung round to the lower-formers. 'One more shout and off you'll all go,' she announced. 'I can tell you straight away now that there is nothing whatever I can teach June in the way of playing the fool - she knows all the tricks there are - but she doesn't know much about playing real tenuis, I'm afraid. P<» you see how badlv she plays a backhand ball? She goes like this - instead of like this! And did you notice her feet when she played those balls off the right-hand side? All wrong!'

June stood still, fuming. Why point out her faults to the audience? But she knew why, of course. It was Amanda's return for that bit of clowning. Every time she clowned, and a laugh came, Amanda would stop and point out other faults of June's!

The next time a ball went near where the spectators were, June spoke to them in a low voice.

'I wish you'd clear off. It's jolly difficult trying to concentrate with you all looking.'

But they didn't clear off, especially when Amanda stopped the pat-ball play and began to explain to June, in her loud, dominating voice, the few hundred things she did wrong. It was wonderful to see the don't-care June having to stand there like someone from the kindergarten and listen to all her tennis failings. The lower forms really enjoyed it.

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June didn't enjoy it at all. If she had been a weaker character she would have made up her mind to call the whole thing off, and refuse to be coached again. But June was not weak - and besides, she couldn't help realizing that Amanda really did know what she was talking about. And Amanda also knew how to be patient and how to explain a thing simply and clearly.

June found herself looking at Amanda with unwilling admiration as she illustrated, by various swings of her racket and placing of her feet, exactly what she meant.

I've learned more in this one coaching than I've learned in a whole term, thought June. But she didn't tell Amanda that. She wasn't going to hand the loud-voiced Amanda any bouquets!

Amanda didn't hand June any bouquets either. She merely said, 'That's enough for today. You've plenty of to think about, as you can see. Get some of them right for next time. And be down at the swimming-pool to the minute tomorrow

morning. I've only ten minutes to give you, and I don't want a second wasted.'

June was down to the minute. Amanda was there exactly on time too. She put June through a very gruelling ten minutes, and found as many faults with her swimming as she had done with her tennis. Darrell, Moira and Mary-Lou happened to be there too, and they watched in silence.

'If June can stick it, this is going to do her a world of good,' said Darrell. 'My word - what a driver Amanda is she never lets up for a moment.'

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'June can stick it all right. The question is - will she?' said Mary-Lou. 'I have a feeling she'll get very tired of all this soon - not the coaching, but the way it's done. So ultimately, somehow.'

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Three or four second-formers came down to swim, among them Josephine, fat and pasty-looking, airing her opinions as usual. They weren't worth anything, of

course. They never were. But, like her father, she loved hearing the sound of her voice, and if she could boast about anything, she did.

She had plenty to boast about. 'My father has a whole fleet of cars! My mother has a diamond necklace she never wears because it's too valuable. We've a dog at home worth five

hundred pounds. My aunt's sending me five pounds for my birthday. My brother's got . . .'

These were the items of family news that Jo continually talked of. There was no doubt at all that they were true.

'Miss Parker is an old nosey! I meant to get out of swimming this morning, and of course she must come and poke her nose in and send me out. I told her what I thought of her. I said . . .'

'Shut up,' said Amanda, who was shouting instructions to June in the water 'Shut up. and get into the water. I'm coaching someone.'

Jo gave a giggle. She hadn't at first recognized Amanda in her swimming-costume. 'Oh, it's Amanda. Oh, do let's watch this. It'll be as good as the tennis.'

She happened to get in Amanda's way, and impatiently Amanda gave her a push. Into the water went Jo with an agonized squeal. The others yelled with laughter.

But Jo had gone into a deep part, and she couldn't swim. She came up, gasping and terrified, trying to feel the bottom with her feet. But there was no bottom to feel. She went under again.

'Look - quick - Jo's in the deep water!' yelled Darrell. 'She can't swim/

June swam up to the struggling Jo, and began to life- save her. But Jo was now completely out of control, and so terrified that she clutched hold of June and dragged her under too. She was fat and heavy, and June could do nothing with her.



There was a splash as Amanda dived neatly in. In a moment she was by Jo and had gripped her. 'Let go, lune!' she ordered. 'I'll manage her!'

Jo clutched blindly at Amanda, who saw there was mly one thing to be done. She must bring Jo back to her ,enses immediately - and she could only do that by ■Jving her a sharp shock. Otherwise it would take ages to ^et the terrilied girl lo the edge of the pool.

She raised her hand and slapped Jo very sharply on ihe right cheek. The slap echoed round the pool. Jo gasped and came to her senses at once, very angry indeed.

That's right. Now you listen to me,' ordered Amanda, JiarpIy. 'Don't clutch. I've got you all right. Lie still and i ll lake you to the edge.'

It was only a few seconds before Amanda had got Jo :o the edge, and Moira and Darrell and Mary-Lou were hauling her up.

lo collapsed. She wailed She howled 'I nearly drowned. You hit me! I'll write to my lather and tell him \ou pushed me in, you big bully!' she wailed. T feel iwful. I nearly drowned. Oh, my cheek does hurt where \ on slapped me!'

'Don't be silly,' said Moira. 'You didn't nearly drown. You just lost control of yourself. You didn't even trv to wim though you've been having lessons!'

'Amanda got you out all right,' said Mary-Lou, gently, seeing that Jo had been really frightened. 'She didn't know you couldn't swim or she wouldn't have pushed \ ou in.'

'She's a bully,' wept Jo. 'I'll tell my lather.'

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Tell him,' said Amanda. 'The only thing that's wrotig w it h  
you is that you're a little coward. I'll give you special <  
oaching too, if you like - I'll have you swimming like a iish in  
a couple of lessons!'

That was the last thing Jo wanted. She dressed and, ■mil  
weeping and uttering threats, went back to the hoof. The  
others laughed.

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'Poor Jo Mary-Lou.

! she doesn't lit in £ What a little idiot she is!

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lo got very little sympathy from anyone except a small iirst-former called Deirdre. Deirdre met her as she was oming up from the pool, still weeping.

'Oh! What's the matter, .lo?' asked Deirdre, in distress. Have you hurt yourself?'

'I've been practically drowned,' said Jo, more tears  
■pringing out. That brute of an Amanda pushed me into the  
deep end, though she knew I couldn't swim. She ■■sapped  
me too - look! I shall tell my lather.'

'Oh, I should,' said Deirdre, flattered at the way this second-  
former was talking to her, a first-former. Deirdre i ouldn't  
swim either, and she could quite well understand what fear  
Jo had felt when she had been pushed into the deep end of  
the pool. 'How wicked of \manda. Nobody likes her and I'm  
not surprised.'

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To sat down on a ledge of rock, halfway up the Jiff. She wiped  
her eyes with her hand. 'I don't feel well,' she said. 'I feel  
beastly. I'm sure I'm chock-full ■1 sea water. I shan't be able  
to eat anything at .ill today.'

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This seemed dreadful to Jo, and almost as dreadful to  
Deirdre, who had a very good appetite. She ventured [o feel  
Jo's arm.

'You're shivering,' she ^aid. 'You'd better go in. Shall I fetch  
Matron for you?'

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'Oh goodness, no,' said Jo, at once. She had no more ;"ve for Matron than Matron had for Jo. Matron had too !'en seen through .Jo's pretences and evasions. One ot

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them was a had headache on the afternoons when a long walk was prescribed!

'Funny,' Matron had said. 'Long walk - headache. The two always go together with you, Jo. Well, you can take your headache on the long walk. It'll do it good!'

So Jo certainly didn't want any attention from Matron on the morning when she had been 'practically drowned'. All Jo wanted was sympathy and a lot of it.

But the only sympathy she got was from the little first-former, Deirdre. Everyone else laughed at her.

'Practically drowned]' said Susan, scoffing. 'You just went under and got a mouthful of water, Jo.'

'I'll hold you under for a lot longer if you really would like to know what being "practically drowned" is like,' offered June, when she had heard Jo's laments about six times.

'Jo\ been practically drowned at least twelve times/ said Dawn. 'I can't think why she doesn't try and learn to swim. Then she wouldn't keep on getting "practically drowned"!''

'I don't know why you're so mean to me,' said Jo, looking pathetic. 'Don't I share my sweets and cakes and everything with you? Didn't I tell you I'd just got twenty-five pounds from my aunt to spend on a birthday feast? You know we'll have a jolly good time on my money. Don't I always . . .?'

'Be quiet,' said Felicity, crossly. 'Don't we all share our things with one another? You're not the only one!'

'Yes, but I get so many more things,' said Jo. 'Look at that enormous cake I had last week - it lasted our table two days. And look at . . .'

'Don't keep on pushing your riches down our throats!' said June, exasperated. 'And keep your cakes and sweets to yourself in future. I don't want any. You keep on and on reminding us of them. Eat them all yourself!'

Jo's eyes filled with tears. 'You're mean/ she said. 'You're all horrid. One of these days I'll run away!'

'Do,' said June. 'It would be too wonderful for words to wake up one morning and find your bed empty. What a relief!'

Jo sniffed dolefully and went in search of Deirdre again. She knew Deirdre would be sympathetic. And so he was - especially when Jo produced a big box of chocolates that had come the day before, and which, so far, she hadn't shared with anyone.

'I shan't give the second-formers one single chocolate,' Jo declared. 'We'll have them all, Deirdre. Go 'in - take half the box back with you. And when my next cake comes I'll give you a quarter of it!'

Deirdre had no mother to send her any cakes or sweets. She had only a father, who was at sea, and an old aunt who

didn't realize that little girls liked parcels at boarding school. So she was very thrilled with the chocolates indeed. They were magnificent ones too, as Jo's always were.

'My family never get anything but the best,' Jo said, she found that she could boast as much as she liked to Deirdre, who drank it all in. 'I wish you could see my bedroom at home, Deirdre - it's all red and gold - and I've got a little bathroom of my own too, done in red and gold.'

This was perfectly true. Jo's father was rolling in money. Jo once boasted that there wasn't anything her father couldn't buy. June had enquired whether he had enough money to buy himself a few hundred Hs. Jo had never forgiven June for that. For the first time she had realized that her father's loud-voiced remarks were made all the worse by the way he continually dropped his Hs, and by his curious lapses in grammar.

Amanda actually came after Jo one morning to ask her if she would like her to coach her in swimming. She had felt rather guilty about pushing Jo in, and had kicked herself for not finding out first if she could swim. Jo turned her back rudely on Amanda.

No thanks,' she said curtly. 'It's a good thing for you

I didn't write and tell my father. Anyway I wouldn't be put through what you're giving June for anything in the world. No, thank you!'

Sally was with Amanda. She swung Jo round by the shoulder. 'Now, just apologize to Amanda for your rudeness,' she said. 'Go on, quick!'

'No,' said Jo, seeing the admiring Deirdre nearby.

'Very well,' said Sally, whipping out her little Punishment Book. 'You can learn any piece of poetry in your French poetry book, so long as it's not shorter than twenty lines. And say it to me before Wednesday next.'

'I apologize,' said Jo, sulkily. French was not one of her best subjects.

'Too late,' said Sally. 'The punishment stands. And take that scowl off your face.'

'No. Hold it!' said Belinda's voice from the back, and out came her sketch-book. 'It isn't often I get such a nice fine fat scowl! Aha - see yourself, young Jo!'

Jo gazed in anger at the caricature of herself - wickedly like her at her most bad-tempered. She turned on her heel and slouched off, Deirdre following her like a faithful little dog.

'That kid wants taking in hand,' said Sally. 'I hear from Felicity that she gets parcels practically every day from home - really extravagant ones too. And the money she gets! If I catch her flinging it about I shall confiscate it or send her to Matron. Those lower-formers have got to stick to the rules where money is concerned. It isn't fair to the others, who only have a couple of pounds a term to spend. She's a pest, that kid.'

The interest in Amanda's coaching of June soon died down. June stuck it, though sometimes with a bad grace. Amanda never praised - that was the worst of her. She found fault dozens of times, but even when June really did produce an ace of a serve, Amanda's only comment would be, 'Well, it's pleasant to see a good serve at last!'

Amanda herself soon proved to everyone that she was far and away the best in the school at tennis and swimming.



She was put automatically into the first team for swimming and diving and the first tennis team too. It was a joy to watch her swim or play. Darrell never ceased to marvel at the grace of her great hefty body on the tennis-court or in the pool.

Moira and Amanda had many squabbles, especially over helping the younger ones. Moira was very good about this, but Amanda took no interest at all.

'Tessie's got to learn how to place her balls better,' she would say. Or, 'Lucy would be better if she stopped veiling about at swimming and practised a bit more, she'd be good then.'

'Well - what about telling Tessie, and showing Lucy what she should do?' Moira would say, impatiently. 'You have to see what's wrong - but you never never want to put it right Except for June. She's the only one.'

Amanda didn't answer. She didn't seem to be listening and this always annoyed Moira more than anything

'That's right. Look away in the distance and think of the wonderful days when you'll win everything at the Olympic Games,' sneered Moira, going out of the room.

Moira would have liked to be as good as Amanda was at games. They were her greatest interest, much to the delight of the girl, Suzanne's, perpetual astonishment.

'This Moira, this Amanda,' she said to Mam'zelle Dupont 'elles sont tres drôles'

'Speak in English, Suzanne,' Mam'zelle would say, severely 'How many times must I tell you this?'

'Police?' said Suzanne.

You beard me,' said Mam'zelle. 'Now - say what you said - in English, please.'

This Moira, this Amanda - they -- are vairy piggy- hoo-learrrr!' said Suzanne, earnestly

Mam'zelle stared at her. 'H'Inn was that word?" she asked, astonished.

'Piggy-hoo-learrrrrr!' repeated Snzanne. 'It is a true word, Mam'zelle Dupont. Darrell tiehed it me.'

'Darrell taught you?' said Mam'zelle. 'Ah, I must ask her what it is.'

It turned out to be 'peculiar', of course, and for some time after that everything odd was referred to as 'piggy- hoo-learrrrr'! Alicia took it upon herself to teach Suzanne a tew more words, which also astonished poor Mam'zelle very much.

She taught the unsuspecting Suzanne such words as 'fiddlesticks!', 'piffle', and 'scrumplicious', which, of course, was a mixture of scrumptious and delicious.

Suzanne liked the words very much, and used them whenever she could. She described Mam'zelle's new lace collar as 'scrumpleeeecious!' and amiably told her that in her opinion swimming was 'peefle' and 'vairy feedle-steecks' and didn't Mam'zelle agree with her?

'What is this "peefle" and "feedlesteecks"?' Mam'zelle asked suspiciously. They are not words. Alicia, have you ever heard of them, tell me truly?'

'Oh yes, Mam'zelle/ said Alicia, gazing innocently at Mam'zelle. She caught sight of a hair-pin coming out of Mam'zelle's bun, and the sight made her remember the wonderful magnet. Had June used it again? She must find out.

'Peefle/ muttered Mam'zelle, feverishly searching through the dictionary for it. 'Peefle. He is not here, this peefle. Suzanne, take this dictionary and look through it carefully for me.'

'Police?' said Suzanne, politely. Mam'zelle exploded.

'Yes - look up your everlasting "police", too!' she cried. 'See what it means. One day they will be after you - the POLICE! Ah, you foolish girl. Never will you learn to spik the English as he should be spoke.'

s\uyc\{ — wel (a nice fittfe plot

\licia remembered to ask June about the magnet. June e.rinned at her, put her hand into the pocket of her navy-blue gym skirt and pulled out the neat, powerful :iitle magnet.

Alicia took it. It was very heavy. She slid it along the icsk. A large pencil-sharpener appeared almost to leap through the air and fasten itself on the magnet. Then a .ompass came, and two or three paper-clips.

We played me trick on Mam zeile Rougier again,' viid June. 'Harriet did it that time. We did it a bit diilerently, and it was just as funny.'

'What happened?' asked Alicia.

Well, the hair-pins came out again, of course,' said kmc, smiling broadly. 'And Harriet quickly took them off the magnet, and dropped them by the door when she went back to her place. Mam'zelle Rougier felt her hair going down her back and put up her hand to see, of course. She umidn't find a single pin and looked absolutely horrified.

'Then Felicity put up her hand and said she had seen Mime hair-pins down by the door, and were they Mam'zelle's by any chance?

Mam'zelle simply couldn't understand how they had got there. We offered all kinds of explanation. I said Mam'zelle must have dropped them coming in. Harriet said she didn't think they could be Mam'zelle's, and how lucky it was that somebody else had dropped hair-pins in the classroom, and . . .'

Mam'zelle Rougier will be smelling rats if you offer too many explanations,' said Alicia, with a laugh.

'I think she does smell a rat, actually,' said June. 'She keeps on and on putting up her hand to her hair to see if it's still up, and she fingers her hair-pins all day long to make sure they're still there! And she looks frightfully suspiciously at us now!'

'I wish I could see it played on Mam'zelle Dupont,' sighed Alicia. 'She's the one that would be the funniest.'

'Yes. It's a pity sixth-formers are too high and mighty to play a little joke,' said June. 'I hope I'm not like that if ever I get into the sixth.'

'You won't be much good if you aren't,' said Alicia. 'Well - it's a good trick. I'd like to have had it when I was in the second

form, I think I'd have used it to more effect than you appear to have, though!

She went off. June looked after her. Now how would Alicia have used it to better effect? It couldn't be done! June put the magnet back slowly into her pocket, her quick mind going over all that Alicia had said.

She sought out Felicity and Sally, and the three of them put their heads together. Jo came into the room and saw them. She went over, all agog at once.

'What's the secret? What's up?' she said.

'Nothing,' said June.

'You might tell me,' said Jo, offended. 'I do think you're mean. I'm always kept out of everything. I always share things. I'm planning to have a first-class feast next week. Look - I've got twenty-five pounds!'

For about the fourth time that day she took the notes out of the pocket of her tunic to show the others. She did not dare to keep them in her drawer in case Matron found them and removed them.

'We've seen them too many times already,' said Felicity, bored. 'What's your father going to send you for your birthday? A Rolls-Royce? Or a string of race-horses? Or will he be too mean for words and only send

you a real pearl necklace?'

Jo turned away angrily. How was it she never never could learn not to show off? Felicity wondered, Did she take after her parents so closely that she had all their mannerisms and habits too?

A most unfortunate thing happened to Jo just after she had left the common-room. The pocket of her tunic wore through - and it happened to be the one in which she kept her money! No doubt much pulling in and out of notes had weakened it. Anyway, it quietly frayed, and Jo didn't know it.

She wandered down the corridor, feeling the familiar sensation of being left out in the cold. What had those three been mumbling about? Why didn't they tell her? She determined to go and find Deirdre and talk against the second-formers once more. Deirdre was always a willing listener, and a more than willing sharer of Jo's many goodies.

Matron came out of her room just as Jo had passed. She was most astonished to see a five pound note lying on the floor. She picked it up. It had fallen out of Jo's pocket, of course, and Jo hadn't noticed it. Matron stuffed it into her pocket and went on again. She came across a second five pound note, lying in the middle of the corridor. How very extraordinary!

Matron became suspicious. Were they real notes - or was this somebody's joke? Were there bright eyes watching her pick them up? Matron glanced round, but there was no one to be seen at all. She looked at the notes. They certainly seemed genuine enough.

She was really amazed when she came across the third one. It was just round the corner, and lay there, hanging a little in the draught of the corridor. Matron picked it up thoughtfully. Surely they couldn't belong to any of the girls? Nobody had so much at once!

'Fifteen pounds.' she said to herself. 'Fifteen pounds -

and not given in to me! And HOW did they come to be here, lying around like this?'

The last two notes lay together in a corner of the corridor near the garden door. Matron pounced on them. 'Twenty-five now! Well, well, well - somebody very rich has been walking along here - but win cast away so much money?'

Matron looked out of the door. She saw two figures in the distance - Deirdre and Jo, talking together earnestly.

A light dawned on Matron. Of course! Jo! Some of her wealthy relations had been providing her with illicit pocket-money again. But twenty-five pounds! How foolish Jo's people were. They were ruining her with their silly, extravagant ideas!

Jo must have dropped them. Matron stood by the door and frowned. Had Jo any more money than this? She should, of course, have given it in to Matron - that was the strict rule. She saw Jo pull at her tunic and slip her hand into her pocket. Ah - so that was where the money was kept!

And then, of course, Jo found the hole - and no notes! She gave a cry of horror and alarm.

Matron disappeared. She went; back to her room. She put the money into her safe and wrote out a notice in her firm, clear handwriting.

Meantime Jo looked at Deirdre in horror when she discovered her money was gone. 'Look - there's a hole in my pocket! I must have dropped the notes. Come on, quickly - we must look for them! They can't be far away/

But, of course, the money was gone. Not a penny could poor Jo find. She wept in dismay, and Deirdre tried to comfort her.

Jo met June, Felicity and Susan coming down the corridor, looking very pleased with themselves. They had made a

very nice little plan, with the magnet as the centre of it! It rushed up to them.

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'I've lost my money - all of it! Do you know if anyone's found it?'

'There'll soon be a notice put up on the big board, if anyone has,' said Felicity, and the three went on, not at all inclined to let Jo weep on their necks.

'Beasts! Unkind beasts!' said Jo. 'Why did I ever come here? Deirdre, you're the only decent person in the school - the only one I can depend on. I've a good mind to run away!'

Deirdre had heard this many times before. 'Oh no,' she said comfortingly. 'You mustn't do that, Jo, dear. Don't say things like that!'

Felicity and the others laughed to see Jo on her knees in the corridor, still searching for the notes, when they came back. They had already seen Matron's notice on the big board. What a shock for Jo when she knew who had found her money!

'Look on the notice board,' said June. 'Someone has found your money, Jo, you'll be glad to know. You can get it back in two minutes!'

Thankfully Jo got to her feet and rushed off with Deirdre to read the notice. June laughed. 'I wonder what Matron will say to Jo,' she said. 'That is - if Jo dares to go and ask for the money!'

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But Jo didn't interest them for more than a minute. They were too pleased with their plot to forget it for long, for they had been looking for Nora to tell it to. Nora would be sure to laugh her head off!

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They found her at last. 'Listen, Nora,' said June. 'You know my cousin Alicia? Well, she saw our magnet today and she said if she had had it she would have played a much better trick than we did - and she was moaning and groaning because she's in the sixth and they're too piggish to play tricks any more.'

So we decided we'd give the sixth form a treat,' woke in Felicity. 'And one of us is going to appear in

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their room with a message to Mam'zelle Dupont, when she's taking a lesson there - and extract all her pins, and then go!

'And Mam'zelle will think one of them has been up to something,' said Susan. 'They simply won't know what to do!'

'We thought we might do it twice or three times, just to show the sixth we play our tricks as well as they could,' said June.

Nora went off into squeals of laughter. 'Oh, let me be the one to go,' she begged. 'Do, do, do! I swear I won't giggle. It's only when I'm with the second form I keep wanting to laugh, and can't stop. I'll be as solemn as a judge if you'll let me go.'

'Well, we thought we would choose you,' said June. 'Mam'zelle might suspect us - we've played tricks on her before - but she'd never suspect you - you're one of her favourites too, so she'll be quite pleased to see you.'

Nora was the fluffy-haired big-eyed type that Mam'zelle always loved. She twinkled at the three plotters. 'I'll do it!' she said, with a chuckle. 'I'll do it three times if you want me to!'

'Oh no - somebody else must do it next,' said June. 'We don't want Mam'zelle to get suspicious - and she would if you kept on appearing!'

'Especially if her hair fell down each time,' giggled Susan. 'Golly, I wish I was going to be there!'

'Here comes Jo!' whispered June. 'My word, she looks petrified!'

Jo was petrified! She had gone to the notice board and had seen Matron's notice at once.

Will the person who dropped twenty-five pounds in five pound notes along the corridor please come to me?

Matron

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Problems |or Awitfwta

Poor Jo lamented loud and long to Deirdre about her bad luck. To think that Matron had the money! How in the world could she explain to Matron that she had had twenty-five pounds - twenty-five pounds - and not handed it in for safe custody as usual?

'Jo, you'll just have to go and tell her,' said Deirdre, anxiously. 'If you don't, you might not get the money back, ever. If Matron doesn't know who it belongs to, how can she give it back?'

'Well, I suppose I'd better,' said Jo. But she had no sooner got to the door than she came back. 'I can't,' she said to Deirdre. 'I daren't lace her. Don't think me a coward, Deirdre, but honestly I shake at the knees when Matron puts on that face of hers and says the most awful things.'

Timid little Deirdre had never had any awful things said to her by Matron, but she knew she would feel the same as Jo if she had. She stared at Jo. How were they to get out of the difficulty?

'Jo - I suppose you couldn't slip into Matron's room when she's not there, and just see if the money is lying anywhere

about, could you?' she said, in a half whisper. 'After all - it's yours. You would only be taking what belongs to you!'

Jo's little eyes gleamed. 'Yes!' she said. 'I might be able to do that - if only Matron has got the money somewhere loose. I know I've seen some tied up in neat packages on her table sometimes - 'petty cash, I suppose. She might

have put mine there, too, ready to hand out to the loser.'

'She wouldn't hand it out,' said Deirdre. 'You know that. She'd keep it and dole it out. All the lower-formers have their pocket-money doled out to them. You'd probably get just a bit of it each week, and the rest would be handed back to you when you go home for the holidays.'

Jo frowned. 'I meant to spend that money on a terrific treat,' she said. 'It's my birthday soon, you know. I simply must get it somehow.'

'Shh,' said Deirdre. 'Someone's coming.'

It was Felicity. She poked her nose round the door and grinned. 'Got your money back yet, Jo?' she said. 'Or are you going to make a present of it to Matron? I know I wouldn't care to go and own up to having twenty-five pounds - especially if I had been careless enough to lose it too! What an ass you are '

'Shut up, Felicity,' said Jo. 'I've had enough of people getting at me all the time. I can't think why you're all on to me every minute of the day. Anyone would think I wasn't fit to be at Malory Towers.'

As this was exactly what most of the second-formers did think, Felicity made no reply. Jo never would fit, she was certain. If she had had parents who would have picked up

the school, and helped Jo, there might have been a chance for her.

But they laugh at the rules of the school, they tell Jo not to bother to keep any rule if she doesn't want to, they send her parcels of things she's not supposed to have, and far too much money, thought Felicity, going on to practise serving at tennis. Her father keeps saying she's only to enjoy herself, and not to bother to work hard - he was always at the bottom of the form, and yet now he's rolling in money - so he thinks it doesn't matter if Jo's at the bottom too!

It was puzzling that some parents backed up their

children properly, and some didn't. Surely if you loved your children you did try to bring them up to be decent in every way? And yet Jo's father seemed to love her. It puzzled Felicity. If he really did love her, how could he encourage her to break rules, to be lazy, to do all the wrong things? How could he laugh when he read disapproving remarks on Jo's reports?

Jo said he clapped her on the back and roared with laughter when he read what Miss Parker had written at the bottom of her report last term, remembered Felicity. What was it she wrote, now? 'Jo has not yet learned the first lesson of all - the difference between plain right and wrong. She will not get very far until she faces up to this lesson.' Gosh - if I'd had that on my report, Daddy would have been broken-hearted, and I should have got the most awful rowing. But Jo's father only laughed!

Felicity found Susan, who was going to take her practice serves. Soon they were on a court, and Felicity was laming the balls hard at the patient Susan. Amanda wandered up

after a time and watched. Felicity redoubled her efforts at serving well.

Since Amanda had taken on June and was training her so well, every lower-former hoped to be singled out for a little attention from the big sixth-former. Felicity sent down one or two fast serves, and Susan called out to Amanda.

'She's good, isn't she, Amanda?'

'So-so,' said Amanda, and turned away, not appearing in the least interested.

'Beast!' said Susan, under her breath. 'Moirra would at least have said yes or no - and if Felicity was doing something wrong she'd have set her right, and if she was doing well, she would have praised her.'

Actually Amanda had hardly noticed Felicity's play. She was thinking hard about something. About two things, in fact. She was worried about June -- not about

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her progress, which was, in fact, amazing. Amanda knew how and what to teach, and June was a very able and quick pupil - but June was getting tired of Amanda's strictness and lack of all praise. She was becoming annoyed with the sharp commands and curt orders, it had never been easy for June to knuckle under to anyone, and to be ordered about by someone she really disliked was getting a little too much for her.

She had said so to Amanda the day before. Amanda had taught her a fast new swimming-stroke, and had insisted on her thrashing her way up and down the pool, up and down.

Then she had gone for June because she hadn't paid attention to some of her shouted instructions.

'You deliberately swam all the way up the pool using your legs wrong,' she said. 'I yelled at you, but you went on and on.'

'Do you suppose I can hear a word when water is in my ears, and my arms are thrashing over my head like 1 bunder?' demanded the panting June. 'It's true that even the school could probably hear your voice, and no doubt they could even hear it at the post-office, a mile away - it's always loud enough! But I couldn't, so you'd better get a megaphone. Though I grant you your voice is better than any megaphone, at any time, in any place. Why, even at church . . .'

'That's enough,' said Amanda, angrily. 'I don't take cheek from a second-former.'

'And I'm beginning to feel I won't take orders from a sixth-former,' said June, drying herself with a towel. 'I've had almost enough. So I warn you, Amanda -'

Amanda was about to say something really cutting, but stopped herself. She had begun to be very proud of June. June was a most marvellous pupil, although unfriendly and usually silent, it would be a pity to stop the coaching now that June was almost as perfect as she could hope to be at tennis and swimming. She was quite good enough for the second team now, and Amanda meant to ask to have her tried out for it in a week or two's time.

So Amanda turned away, fuming inwardly, but trying not to show it. June grinned to herself. She knew quite well that Amanda didn't want to give up the coaching now that June was proving her right in what she had said to the others. All

the same, thought June, I'm getting tired of it. This is a most unpleasant term, slaving like this. Do I really, honestly, care enough about being in the second team to go through all this? I'm not sure that I do!

That was June all over, of course. If she took enough trouble, and cared enough, she could shine at anything. But there seemed to be a flaw in her strong character that caused her not to care enough about things.

June was one of the problems that occupied Amanda's mind. The other was her own swimming. Swimming was perhaps her most magnificent achievement in the sports line. To see Amanda hurtle across the pool was a sight in itself. Nobody could swim even one half as fast. Even the small first-formers stopped their chattering when Amanda looked to the water.

And what Amanda was thinking hard about was her swimming. The pool wasn't enough for her. She wanted to swim right out to sea. How could she get enough practice for really long-distance swimming if she didn't swim in the sea? The pool was wonderful - wide and long and deep - but after all, it was only a pool. Amanda wanted to swim for at least a mile! Two miles, she thought, exultantly, three miles! I am strong enough to swim the Channel, I really do believe.

At Trenigan, where her old school had been, the sea coast was safer than the treacherous Cornish coast at Malory Towers, with its strong currents, and vicious rocks on which great waves pounded day and night, but Amanda was sure she could overcome even a strong current.

No one was allowed to swim right out to sea at Malory Towers. That was an unbreakable rule. Anyone wanting real sea-swimming from the shore could go in a party to another



beach some way along, and swim in safety from there. But no one was allowed to swim out trout the shore at Malory Towers.

No one even wanted to! Enormous waves ran up the rocks to the pool. Even on a calm day, the blue water surged and heaved, and swept with great force over the oeks. Amanda, who loved the strength ol water, longed ;o battle with the tierce sea here. She was quite fearless n all physical things.

She had hardly seen Felicity's tennis, as she stood by court, idly following the bail wiib hei eyes. Should she take a chance, and go swimming out to sea some time? She didn't much care if she got into a row or not. She wasn't going to stay very long at Malory Towers, and the rules didn't frighten her! She suddenly made up her mind.

I will go swimming out to sea, she decided. I've talked to Jack the fisherman, and he's told me what currents there are. If I went down to the edge of the rocks at low tide, I could dive off into deep water, and avoid the worst v urrents by swimming to the west, and then straight out. i should be all right.

The thing was - when could she do this unnoticed? Not that she minded getting into a row - but it was silly to do that if it could be avoided. Amanda turned the matter over in her mind.

Early morning would be best, she thought. Very early morning. Nobody would be about then. I could have about an hour and a hall's real swimming, it ' mid be heaven!

Having settled that, Amanda felt happy. She wished she could settle the June business as easily. But that didn't altogether rest with her! She wasn't going to give in to June's ideas as to how she should be coached, and if June

chose to be rude and make things difficult, then there might be a serious row.

'I don't want one!' said Amanda to herself. 'But if June provokes one, perhaps it will clear the air, and let her know where she stands. I'm certainly not going to put up with any nonsense, and I think if it came to the point, June wouldn't be idiot enough to throw away her chance of being put in the second school teams.'

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H^-term

Half-term came and went. It was brilliant weather and the parents thoroughly enjoyed themselves wandering over the school grounds and down by the sea.

The enclosed garden, set in the hollow square in the middle of the four-towered building, was very popular. It was crammed with hundreds upon hundreds of rose-hedges, and the sight and scent of these filled the fathers and mothers with delight.

'I'm glad Malory Towers is at its very best my last half-term,' Darrell said to her mother, as she took her to see the roses. 'I shall always remember it like this. Oh, Mother, thank you a thousand times for choosing this school for me. I've been so happy here.'

Her mother squeezed her arm. 'You've done very well indeed at Malory Towers,' she said. 'All the mistresses have been telling me how much they will miss you, and what a help you've always been. They are glad you have a sister to follow in your footsteps!'

Gwen went by with her mother and Miss Winter. 'My last half-term!' she was saying. 'Fancy, my next half-term will be in Switzerland. I'm sure I shall be much happier there than I've ever been here.'

Gwen's father had not come. Gwen was glad. 'I was afraid he might come and spoil everything,' she said to her mother. 'He was so horrid to us last holidays, wasn't he?'

'He would have come,' said Miss Winter. 'But he's not well. He hasn't really been well for some time, Gwen. You should have written to him this term, you know. I

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really do think you should.'

'It's not your business/ said Gwen, coldly. 'Honestly, you can't always tell whether Daddy isn't well, or is just bad-tempered, can you. Mother? Anyway, we shan't miss him today.'

'Where's Maureen?' asked Mrs Lacey. Maureen, so like Gwen, with her fluffy golden hair and big, pale-blue eyes, was quite a favourite with Mrs Lacey and the old governess. But Gwen wasn't going to have anything to do with Maureen that day! Maureen 'sucked up' to Gwen's people and they just loved it.

'Maureen's got her own people here today,' she said. 'Poor Maureen - I'm sorry for her, Mother. She's not going to a finishing school, or even to college of any sort. She's just going to take a secretarial course, and go into somebody's office!'

Jo's people came by, with Jo hanging on to her father's arm. The big, loud-voiced, vulgar man could, as usual, be heard all over the place.

'Not a bad little rose-garden this, Jo, eh?' he said. 'Course it's not a patch on ours. Let's see, Ma, how many roses have we got in our rose-garden?'

'Five thousand/' said Mrs Jones, in a low voice. She was always rather overawed by the other parents, and she was beginning to wish that her husband wasn't quite so loud and bumptious. She had caught sight of a few astonished glances, and a few sly smiles. She wondered if she had put on too much jewellery?

She had. She 'dripped with diamonds', as June said to Susan. 'I'm only surprised she doesn't have a diamond nose-ring, as well as all the rest,' said June. I've a good mind to suggest it to Jo. She could pass on the idea, perhaps.'

'No, don't,' said Susan, afraid of June's unkind wit. 'She can't help having such parents. Oh, isn't her father dreadful this time?'

He really was. He had cornered Miss Parker, Jo's former mistress, and was blaring at her in his fog-horn voice.

'Well, Miss Parker - how's our Jo getting along? Naughtiest girl in the form as usual? Ah, well - they're always the most popular, aren't they? The things I used to do as a boy. My name's Charlie, so they called me Cheeky Charlie at school! The things I said to my teachers! Ha ha ha!'

Miss Parker made no reply. She merely looked disgusted. Jo felt frightened. She knew that face of Miss Parker's. She had a feeling that Miss Parker might say something that even Cheeky Charlie wouldn't like.

Her father went blundering on. 'Well, you haven't said a word about our Jo. She's a card, isn't she? Ha ha - I bet she calls you Nosey Parker!' And he actually gave Miss Parker a dig in the ribs!

'I have nothing to say about Jo except that she apparently takes after her father/ said Miss Parker, starlet with annoyance. She turned away to speak to Darrell's mother, who had come to her rescue. Everyone always hoped to be rescued from Mr Jones!

'Daddy! You shouldn't have said that/ said Jo, in great distress. 'That was awful. You made her angry. Please don't say things like that.'

'Well, I like that/ said Mr Jones, tipping his hat back on his head and scratching the top of his forehead. 'What did I say? Oh - I was being old Cheeky Charlie again, was I? Well, you do call her Nosey Parker, don't you? My word, there's your Head. I must have a word with her/

Jo tried to pull him back, and cast an agonized glance at her mother. Jo was beginning to realize that her father hadn't very good manners. Why why, why did he shout so, why did he always have such a bright red shiny face, why did he poke people in the ribs and tell silly jokes? Why did he barge in on people when they were talking 'together, and interrupt them?

He was doing that now. Jo hadn't been able to prevent him from going right up to the little group in which the Head Mistress stood, talking to three or four parents. Her mother was blushing red. She too knew that 'Cheeky Charlie' was not at his best.

'Hallo, hallo, hallo!' said Mr Jones, walking right into the middle of the group, and holding out a great red hand to

Miss Grayling. 'You're like the Queen of England today, aren't you - holding court, with us poor parents as subjects! Ha ha ha!'

Mr Jones was so pleased with this brilliant remark that he was quite overcome, and beamed round, expecting much approval and admiration.

He got none. Miss Grayling shook hands politely and then dropped Mr Jones's great paw immediately. 'How do you do?' she murmured, and turned back to the parent she was speaking to. Not one of them looked at Mr Jones, but Cheeky Charlie had a very thick skin and didn't notice things like that.

'I hope our Jo's a credit to her school,' he began again. 'Her pa wasn't! He was a naughty boy, he was - always at the bottom of the form, wasn't he, Ma? Well, the school's looking fine, Miss Grayling!'

'Thank you,' said Miss Grayling. 'I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me for a few minutes, whilst I finish my talk to Dr and Mrs Leyton.'

Mrs Jones pulled at his arm. 'Come away, Charlie,' she begged, thinking that her husband must really have got a touch of sunstroke. He always did behave like this, of course, and shout and boast - but somehow it didn't show so much at home, among his own friends. Here it suddenly seemed very vulgar and out of place.

Mr Jones was about to address a few hearty words to Dr Leyton, when he caught an extraordinarily icy look in that distinguished-looking gentleman's eye. It reminded Cheeky Charlie of one of his old headmasters who had once told him exactly what he thought of him. Mr Jones

kicked away, mumbling something.

Miss Grayling sighed with relief. 'I'm sorry,' she said to the other parents. 'It was an experiment, taking Jo - I'm afraid it's not an experiment that's going to work out well. We've had other experiments before, as you know - taking girls that don't really fit in, hoping they will, later. And so far they always have done, in a marvellous way. I think Jo would too, if only she got a little backing from her parents. But her father always undoes any good we do here for Jo!'

'Let's go to another part of the grounds,' said one of the other parents in the group. 'I feel it would be safer!'

Jo was relieved to see the Head going off in another direction. Oh dear - she really would have to take her father in hand and tell him a few things. She looked rather downcast and her father squeezed her arm. 'What's up, old lady?' he said, in a kindly voice. 'Cheer up! I don't like to see my little Jo not smiling. Her old dad would do anything in the world for her!'

Jo cheered up at the love in his voice. Blow Miss Parker and Miss Grayling and everyone else! It was half-term and nobody should spoil it. She pulled at her mother's arm.

'Mother! Can I ask Deirdre, my friend, to come and be with us today? Her father's at sea and she's got no mother. So she's alone today.'

'Yes, you ask her,' said her father in his booming voice, before her mother could answer. 'We'll give her a slap-up time. I'm glad you've got a friend at last, Jo! You never seemed to have one before.'

So Deirdre was asked to join the Joneses, and was pleased to have someone to go out with, though Mr Jones was really scared

her with his loud, booming voice and le.vial ways.

So you're my Jo's friend, are you?' he boomed at her.

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name1 Deirdre' Well, we'll send you some stunning

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parcels, won't we, Ma? You stick by Jo, Deirdre!'

'Yes,' stammered Deirdre, almost deafened.

'What about that money Auntie sent you the other week?' enquired Mrs Jones, as soon as she could get a word in. 'We never heard it you got it. Have you got it safe?'

Jo hesitated. She was afraid to tell her mother that she had dropped it, and that Matron had it, and that she, Jo, hadn't dared to go and get it back. If her father knew that, he would go right up to Matron and demand the money then and there, for his precious Jo! That was simply unthinkable.

'It's quite safe/ muttered Jo, and racked her brains to think how to change the subject.

'Oh well - if you've got that money untouched, I won't give you any more at present,' said her mother. 'Twenty-five pounds is enough to keep in your drawer, or wherever you keep it. You can write if you want any more.'

Jo didn't know what to say. She had hoped her mother would give her more money - then she wouldn't need to go poking about in Matron's room for hers. Poor Jo hadn't screwed up her courage even to peep inside Matron's room yet. She had no money at all except for a few coins left from her week's pocket-money - handed out by Matron.



Half-term flashed by. The parents departed by car and train, except for Bill's father and mother, who came and went on horseback, much to Bill's delight and Clarissa's. Their half-term had been spent in riding over the cliffs, the horses enjoying the half-term as much as anyone!

'My last half-term gone,' mourned Darrell. 'Now I'm facing my very last few weeks!'

'Cheer up!' said Alicia. 'A lot can happen in a few weeks.' She was right. A lot did happen - and most of it was really very unexpected!

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The first thing that happened was the row between June and Amanda. Most people had thought the two would blow up sooner or later, and they did!

It was over quite a simple thing. Amanda was coach-ing June at tennis, sending her fast serves to take - so fast and hard that June was half scared of some of them! But she slammed them back valiantly, pleased at being able to handle such terrific serves.

'June! Use your head!' shouted Amanda, stopping her serves for a minute. 'What's the good of returning these fast serves if you don't put the ball somewhere where I've got to run for it! Or even somewhere that I can't reach! All you do is to put them back right at my feet.'

It's as much as I can do to take the serves, let alone pLhv the return ball/ answered June. 'Give me a chance! Also, the court is a bit bumpy this end, and the ball doesn't bounce true. It puts me off when that happens.'

'Don't make excuses,' said Amanda.

'I'm not!' yelled June, indignantly. But Amanda was already throwing the ball high in the air for her next serve.

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The ball flew like lightning over the net to June, Again it bounced on an uneven bit and swerved a little to- the right. June lashed at it wildly.

It flew straight up into the air, and then swerved right over the netting round the court, landing in the middle If a watching group, who fell all over themselves trying 'n taich the ball, shrieking with laughter.

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'If you fool about, .lime, we'll stop,' said Amanda, honestly thinking that .June had hit the ball wildly on purpose. Something immediately went 'ping' inside June, as it always did when she lost her temper.

She didn't lose it outwardly at first. She merely collected up the balls round the court, and then sent them all flying over the surrounding netting into the watching girls, one after another.

'I'm finished,' she announced to Amanda. 'It's impossible to work with you. I shan't turn up for this sort of thing any more. It's not worth my while. So long!'

And under the admiring eyes of the watching girls, June strolled off the court, whistling softly.

Amanda called to her. 'Don't be a fool, June. Come back at once.'

June took no notice. She whistled a little more loudly, and began throwing her racket up into the air and catching it deftly as it came down. She did a few imaginary strokes with it, and then began to fool. The watching girls laughed.

Amanda strode after June. 'June! I told you to come back. If you don't, I'll see you're not chosen for even the third team.'

'Don't want to be!' said June, throwing her racket up into the air again and catching it. 'You go and find some other second-former to bawl at and chivy round. Don't waste that nice kind nature of yours, Amanda.'

And this time she really did go off, having given Amanda a look of such scorn and dislike that Amanda was shocked. The little group of spectators were scared now. They dispersed, whispering. What a bit of news to spread round the school. What a row. And wasn't June MARVELLOUS! Honestly!' whispered the first- and second-formers. 'Honestly, she doesn't care for anyone, not even Amanda!'

Amanda told Sally, Darrell and Moira the news

herself. 'June Hew into a temper and the coaching is off/ she announced. 'I'm not giving up any more of my time to that ungrateful little beast. I'm sorry I gave her any now. But she would have been well worth it.'

'Oh, what a pity!' said Sally. 'We had arranged to watch June swimming tomorrow, and playing tennis the next day, to see if she could go into the second team, as you suggested. She's already good enough for the third, so she could have been in all the matches!'

'Well, she can't be/ said Amanda, and then she spoke spitefully. 'She's gone off her game this week. She doesn't deserve to be in the third team either.'

Alicia spoke to June about it. 'What happened?' she said. 'Couldn't you have stuck it for a bit longer? We were going to come and watch you swimming and playing tennis this week - meaning to put you into the second teams, so that you could play in the matches.'

'I'm not going to be chivied about by anyone/ said June. 'Least of all by Amanda. Not even for the sake of shining in the second teams with the fourth- and fifth - formers!'

'But, June - aren't you rather cutting off your nose to spite your face?' asked Alicia. 'Don't you want to play in the matches? They're important, you know. We do want to win them this year. We lost the tennis shield last year, and were only second in the swimming matches.'

June hesitated. She did want to play in the matches. She would have liked to bring honour and glory to the teams - and yes, to Malory Towers too. June was really beginning at times to see that one should play for one's side and not always for oneself.

'Well,' she said at last. 'I'll be honest with you, Alicia. I was looking forward to playing in the matches, and I was pretty certain I'd be chosen. But Amanda is a slave-driver and nothing else - she made me slave and she got wonderful results - but she's so absolutely inhuman. I couldn't

slick her one moment more, even if it meant giving up the matches.'

'Although you knew you might help the school to get back the tennis shield and win the swimming?' said Alicia.

There was a pause. 'I'm sorry about that,' said June, with an effort. 'I didn't think enough about that side of the question, I'm afraid. But look, Alicia - it's done now, and I'm not going back on my word. I'm fed up to the teeth with tennis and swimming. I don't want to touch a racket again this term, and if I go into the pool, I shall just fool about.'

'You'll fool about all your life, I expect,' said Alicia, getting up. 'All you think about is yourself and your own feelings. I'm sorry about it, June. You're my cousin, and I'd like to have cheered myself hoarse for once, watching you do something fine - like Darrell cheers Felicity.'

She walked off and left June feeling rather small and uncomfortable. But nothing, nothing, nothing would make June go to Amanda again. Nothing in this world. June gritted her white even teeth and swung an imaginary racket into the air and caught it. Finish! No more coaching!

Nora came running up. 'Was that Alicia? You didn't tell her we were going to play the magnet trick on Mam'zelle Dupont today, did you?'

'Don't be an ass,' said June, scornfully. 'Do you suppose I'd split after we said we wouldn't say a word?'

'Oh. Well, you seemed to be having such a confab,' said Nora, 'it came to ask if I could have the magnet. I've been waiting ages to ask you. Was Alicia rowing you?'

'No,' said June, shortly. 'Don't be so jolly inquisitive, and mind your own business. Here's the magnet.'

Nora took it, beaming. She felt proud of being chosen by the second-formers to play the trick up in the grand sixth form. She had planned everything very carefully, with Felicity's help.

'I popped into the sixth form and took one of the  
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exercise books off the desk/ Felicity had told Nora. 'All you've got to do is to walk into the room, apologize, and ask Mam'zelle if the book belongs to a sixth-former. You can do the trick whilst she's examining it.'

It sounded easy. Nora was thrilled when the time came that afternoon. The second-formers were free, but the upper forms were busy with work. Nora sped up to the sixth form with the book.

She heard the drone of someone reading aloud in French as she got there. She knocked at the door. Mam'zelle's voice came at once. 'Entrez'

Nora went in with the book. 'Excuse me, Mam'zelle,' she said, holding out the book. 'But does this belong to one of the sixth-formers?'

Mam'zelle took the book and looked at it. 'Ah - it is Mary-Lou's missing book,' she said. Behind her Nora was holding the powerful little magnet two inches away from Mam'zelle's neat little bun of hair.

Alicia's sharp eyes caught her action and she stared, hardly believing her eyes. All Mam'zelle's hair-pins at once

attached themselves to the magnet. Nora withdrew it hastily, said 'Thank you, Mam'zelle' and shot out of the room before she burst into laughter. Alicia felt sure she could hear the little monkey snorting in the (.orridor as she fled back lo the second-lormers.

Mam'zelle seemed to have felt something. She usually wore more pins in her hair than Mam'zelle Rougier, and probably she had felt them all easing their way out! She put up her hand - and immediately her bun uncoiled itself and flapped down her hack!

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'TiensV said Mam'zelle, surprised. The girls all looked up. Alicia felt like a first-former again, longing to gulp with laughter. Mam'zelle patted her hand over her head to find her hair-pins. She could find none.

'Que c'est drole, gal' said Mam'zelle. 'How strange it is!'

She stood up and looked on the floor, wondering if, for some extraordinary reason, her pins had all fallen down

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there. No, they hadn't. Mam'zelle grovelled on hands and knees and looked under her desk to make certain.

The girls began to laugh. Alicia had quickly enlightened them as to what had happened. The sight of poor Mam'zelle groping about on the lloor for hair-pins that were not there, her hair hanging over one shoulder, was too much even for the staid sixth-formers.

Mam'zelle stood up, looking disturbed. She continued her frenzied hunt for the missing pins. She thought possibly they might have fallen down her neck. She stood and wriggled, hoping that some would fall out. She groped round her collar, her face wearing a most bewildered expression.

She saw the girls laughing. 'You are bad wicked girls!' she said. 'Who has taken my hair-pins? They are gone. Ah, this is a strange and puzzling thing.'

'Most piggv-hoo-leeearrrr,' said Suzanne's voice.

'But nobody could have taken your pins, Mam'zelle,' said Darrell. 'Why, not one of us has come up to your desk this afternoon.'

'Qa, c'cst vrai,' said Mam'zelle, and she looked alarmed. 'That is true. This is not a treek, then. My pins have vanished themselves from my hair. Girls, girls, can you see them anywhere?'

This was the signal for a frantic hunt in every ridiculous nook and cranny. Darrell was laughing helplessly, unable to keep order. For three or four minutes the sixth-formers really might have been back in the second form. Irene produced several explosions, and even the dour Amanda went off into fits of laughter.

'Girls, girls! Please!' Mam'zelle besought them. 'Miss Williams is next door. What will she think?'

Miss Williams thought quite a lot. She wondered what in the world was happening in the usually quiet sixth form. Mam'zelle got up. 'I go to make my bun again,' she said, and disappeared in a dignified but very hurried manner.

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The girls laughed and laughed. 'It was that little monkey ol a Nora,' said Alicia, again. T saw the magnet in her hand. The cheek of ii - a second-former coming right up into our room.'

'Terribly funny, though,' said Clarissa, wiping her :ears away. 'I haven't laughed so much for terms. I wish \ora would do it again, with me lookingV

'Poor Mam'zelle - she was absolutely bewildered,' said Mary-Lou.

'Ah t^a - e'est tres trcs piggy-hoo-leeeearr,' said Suzanne, enjoying the joke thoroughly. 'Vairy, vairy, piggy-hoo-leeeearrrrr. Most scrumpleeeecious!'

Mam'zelle had shot into the little workroom she shared with Miss Potts, the first-form mistress. Miss Potts was mildly surprised to see Mam'zelle appear so suddenly with her hair down her back - not more than mildly though, because in her years with Mam'zelle Miss Potts had become used to various 'piggy-hoo-leeeearrr' behaviour at times from Mam'zelle.

'Miss Potts! All my pins have went!' said Mam'zelle, her grammar going too.

'Pins? What pins?' said Miss Potts. 'You don't mean \our hair-pins, do you? How could they go?'

'That f do not know,' said Mam'zelle, staring at Miss Potts with such tragic eyes that Miss Potts wanted to laugh. 'One moment my bun, he is there on top - the next lie is all undone. And when I look for his pins, they ■'re gone.'

This sounded like a trick to Miss Potts, and she- said so.

'No, no, Miss Potts,' asserted Mam'zelle. 'Not one girl left her place to come to me this afternoon, not one.'

'Oh well,' said Miss Potts, dismissing the matter as one of the many unaccountable things that so often seemed to happen to Mam'zelle, 'I expect you didn't put enough pins in, so your bun just came down.'

Mam'zelle found some pins and pinned her bun up so firmly that it really looked very peculiar. But she wasn't taking any risks this time! She went back to the class-room, with her dignity restored.

Nora recounted what she had done, when she got back to the second-formers. They laughed, 'f bet the sixth got a laugh when Mam'zelle's bun descended!' said June. 'It's a pity you couldn't stay and see.'

The first sixth-former they saw was the French girl, Suzanne. She came hurrying up to them, smiling.

'Ah, you bad Nora!' she cried, and went off into a stream of excited French. Susan, who was good at French, translated swiftly, and the second-formers laughed in delight at the vivid description of Mam'zelle's astonishment and dismay.

'Clarissa said she wished you would do it again, when she was looking,' said Suzanne, in French. 'We would like to see it done. Me also, I would like it very much. We are too big and old and prudent to do tricks - but we do not mind watching youV

This was very naughty of Suzanne. No sixth-former would be silly enough to encourage the younger ones to come and play tricks in their room as much as they liked - which was what Suzanne was telling them to do! But Suzanne was French. She hadn't quite the same ideas of responsibility that the British girls had.

She was often bored with lessons, and longed for 'peefle' of some kind. If the second-formers would

provide some, that would be 'Maguifijuc! SuperbeV

'Right,' said June at once. 'If that's what you want, it shall be done. I'll think up a little something for the entertainment of the sixth.'

June was bored now that she had practically given up playing games or swimming properly. She was in the mood for wickedness and mischief of some kind - and what better than this? She set her sharp brains to work at once.

Jo was aggrieved at not having been told that the hair-pin trick was to be played by Nora in the sixth form. You might have told me,' she said. 'You always leave me out.'

'You tell everything to that first-form baby - what's her name? - Deirdre,' said June. 'That's why we don't let you into our secrets.'

I've a good mind to share my parcel that came today with the first form, instead of with you,' said Jo.

'Do,' said June. 'Probably you can buy their liking and their friendship with food. Unfortunately you can't buy ours. A pity - but there it is!'

Jo was miserable. She was beginning to understand that heaps of money and sweets and food didn't in the least impress the girls. But perhaps if she gave a most wonderful midnight feast on her birthday, and asked them all to it and was very modest and friendly herself, they might think she was not too bad after all?

But how could she buy a grand feast without money? She brooded over the money that Matron had of hers. She still

hadn't claimed it.

'And if I do, she won't give it to me,' Jo wailed to Deirdre for the twentieth time. 'I must screw up my courage, snoop into her room, and see if I can spot where she's put my money.'

A most unexpected opportunity suddenly came. Matron sent a message by Susan to say she wanted Jo.

Jo went pale. 'What for?' she asked.

'Don't know,' said Susan. 'Probably you've mended your red gloves with blue wool again. You must think Matron's colour blind when you keep doing things like that!'

Jo went off dolefully. She left absolutely certain that Matron was going to ask her if the twenty-five pounds was hers. She felt it in her bones!

She found the door of Matron's room open, and went in. There was nobody there. From far down the corridor she could hear yells. Somebody must have fallen down and hurt themselves and Matron had rushed off to give first aid. Jo took a quick look round the familiar room. Ugh, the bottles of medicine!

There was no money to be seen anywhere - but suddenly Jo saw something that made her stand stock-still.

Matron had a small, heavy safe in the corner of the room, into which she locked what money she had - the girls' pocket-money, the doctor's fees, and so on. To Jo's enormous surprise, the safe door was a little open, the keys hanging from the keyhole! Obviously Matron had just been about to open or shut the safe when she had heard the agonized yells. She had rushed out, forgetting the keys left in the safe door.

Jo ran to the door and peered out. Not a soul was there. She ran back to the safe and opened the door. There was a pile of notes on one shelf, and a pile of silver on the next. Jo grabbed some notes, stuffed them into her pocket and fled!

No one saw her go. Not a soul did she meet as she raced back. She went to find Deirdre and they shut themselves into one of the bathrooms and locked the door.

Look,' said Jo, [Hilling the money out of the pocket. 'Nobody was in Matron's office. I've got my money back.'

'But Jo - there's more than twcnlv-live pounds

i do there!' said Deirdre.

So there was. There were nine five pound notes, all new and clean.

'Gosh - I didn't think there were so many,' said Jo. Never mind. I'll borrow the extra four! I can easily get Daddy to send me lour livers when I next write to him, md then I'll put them back.'

'Wouldn't it - wouldn't it be called stealing il we don't put them back at once?' asked Deirdre, scared.

Jo was so frightened that Deirdre might ask her to return them to Matron's room, that she pooh-poohed this suggestion at once. She felt sure she would be caught il she went to put them back!

'No, of course not,' she said. 'Don't be silly. I've always plenty ol money. I don't need to steal, do I? I tell vou, twenty-five pounds of this is my own money and ;..ur fivers I've just borrowed - and I'll pay them back next week.'

Deirdre cheered up. 'Shall we go and buy things for the feast now?' she asked. 'Gosh, what a lot we can get! We'll go over to the town, shall we, next time we're allowed out, and buy stacks of things!'

Jo was very cock-a-hoop now. She felt she had done a very line and daring thing. She got two safety-pins and pinned the notes safely in the pocket of her blouse, afraid that she might lose them again.

The two of them set out the next day to go shopping. 'Where shall we hide the stuff?' said Jo. 'I daren't put it anywhere in the dormy, and the common-room's not safe.'

Well, it's very fine weather. We could really hide it tunder a hedge somewhere,' said Deirdre.

They bought a great many things. Packets of biscuits, tins of Nestle's milk, tins of sardines, chocolate bars by the dozen, bags of sweets, tins of peaches and pears! Deirdre staggered out with half the tins, promising to go back for the others. They had bags with them, but these didn't hold half the goods.

They found a good place in a field to hide the food. An old tree stump had fallen down, covering a hollow beneath it. The girls stuffed everything into the little hollow, which was perfectly dry. They went back for the rest of the things.

They paid the bill - twenty-five pounds! Deirdre could hardly believe her ears. It was more money than she had had to spend in five years!

'We've got good value for the money, though,' said Jo, as they staggered off again, laden with tins and packages. 'There's enough and more for every one of the twenty-three girls in the form!'

They hid the second lot of food, strewed ivy strands over the opening to the hollow, and went back to school, well pleased with themselves. They had decided to ask a dozen or so of the second-formers to go with them to retrieve the food later on. They were sure they could never manage to take it all the way to school without falling by the wayside!

But, before anyone could be told about the exciting array of goods, Jo got into trouble. She was supposed to go out for walks only with another second-former or with someone of a higher form. The first-formers only went for walks accompanied by a sixth-former or by a mistress, though the rule was sometimes disregarded. Jo had broken it by taking a first-former out - and she had also brought Deirdre back an hour too late for her prep.

So that evening Miss Parker, the second-form mistress, gave Jo a shock. She rapped on her desk, after a note had been brought in to her, and everyone looked up from their prep.

'I have here a note,' said Miss Parker. 'It informs me that Deirdre Barker, of the first form, was taken out this afternoon by a second-former - which is against the rules - and did not return until an hour after prep was started in the first form. Deirdre has not given the name of the second-former. I must therefore ask her to stand up so that I may see who it is.'

Everyone knew it was Jo. of course. They had seen her go off with Deirdre, and even if they hadn't they would have guessed it was Jo, Deirdre's friend. One or two looked at Jo expectantly.

And Jo was afraid of owning up! She was afraid of having to say where they had been, and what they had bought, and where the money had come from. She trembled in her seat,



and kept her eyes down. Her cheeks grew crimson. Miss Parker waited for two minutes in silence.

'Very well,' she said. 'If the culprit will not own up, I must punish the whole class. The second form will not go swimming for three days.'

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Still Jo did not stand up. She couldn't. Oh, the girls didn't understand! It wasn't just owning up to taking Deirdre out without permission, it was all the other things that might be found out - that forty-five pounds for instance!

Forty-five pounds. FORTY-FIVE POUNDS. It suddenly began to loom bigger and bigger and bigger. Why had she taken it? Just to get her own money back, and out of bravado too - to impress Deirdre. Jo kept her head down for the rest of prep, but she was quite unable to do any work at all.

The storm broke in the dormitory that night.

'Jo! What do you mean by not owning up?' demanded June. 'You go down and own up immediately. Go on!'

'It wasn't me with Deirdre,' said Jo, feebly.

'Oh, JO! You're worse than ever. How can you tell lies like that?' cried Felicity. 'Go down and own up. You don't really mean to say you're going to have the whole form docked of its swimming for three days? You must be mad!'

'All right, I'm mad, then,' said Jo, feeling like a hunted animal when she saw all the angry, accusing faces turned towards her.

'You're nor fit to be at Malory Towers,' said Susan, in a cutting voice. 'I can't think why you ever came. You're getting worse instead of better.'

'Don't,' said Jo, her eyes filling with tears.

'That's right - cry!' said Katherine. 'You deserve to.

Mow, for the last time, are you going to own up or not?'

'I wasn't with Deirdre.' repeated Jo, obstinately.

'We shall send you to Coventry,' said June. 'We shall not speak to you, any of us, or have anything to do with sou for three whole weeks. See? That's the kind of punishment that is kept specially lor people who behave like you, Josephine Jones - people who let others be punished for what they have done themselves, and then are too cowardly to stop it. We shan't speak to you for three weeks!'

'But - it's my birthday soon - and I've got a feast for everyone!' cried Jo, wildly.

'You'll be the only one at your feast,' said June, grimly. 'Unless you like to ask that drip of a Deirdre. Now it's understood, isn't it, everyone? From this moment Jo is in Coventry!'

Jo hadn't heard of being seni to Covenuy before. It was new to her. It meant that not a single person spoke to her, answered her, or even looked at her. She might not have been there for all the notice they took of her that night. Jo cried in bed. Why hadn't she given up that money to Matron as soon as she had had it from her aunt? That was when all the trouble had begun.

She waited till the others were asleep and then went to find Deirdre. The two crept together into the corridor (o whisper. 'Deirdre - I can't stand it,' wept Jo. 'I shall run away. I want to go home. Everyone's so unkind to me here. Except you.'

'I shouldn't have come shopping with you,' whispered Deirdre. 'I'm the cause of all the trouble.'

'Oh, Deirdre - will you come with me if I run away?' asked Jo, sniffing. 'I'd be afraid to go alone. Please, please sav you'll come with me.'

Deirdre hesitated. The idea of running away scared her - but she was very weak and easily led. Io was much

die stronger of the two and Jo had been very generous to her.

'All right. I'll conic too,' she said, and immediately Jo cheered up. They began to plan.

'I tell you what we'll do,' said Jo. 'We'll take all that food ol ours to that shack we passed on a long country walk we went on last term - do you remember? The first- and second-formers went together and we all played in the shack. It was in a very lonely place. We'll take the food there, and we can stay there a day or two before trying to find the way home.'

This seemed rather a delightful adventure to Deirdre. She agreed at once. 'We'd better get up early tomorrow,' she said, 'and go and take the stuff to and fro. It will take us two journeys at least, and it's quite a long way to that shack.'

Jo felt quite cheerful now. What would the second- lormers feel like when they knew that sending her to Coventry had made her run away? Jo didn't think of the worry she would cause the school and her parents by disappearing suddenly.

She was completely selfish, and soon began to view the whole thing in the guise of a wonderful escapade.

Somehow or other she managed to wake the next morning very early. She dressed and woke Deirdre, whose bed was fortunately beside the door in her dormy. The two set off quietly. They came at last to the hollow where they had hidden their goods, and then began the long trek to and fro to the shack. It took them longer than they imagined. The shack was a good place to hide in. It was a long long way from any road, and only a bridle path led anywhere near it. No one, except for a few hikers, usually came near it.

'There,' said Jo, pleased, putting down the last tin of peaches. 'We must remember to bring a tin-opener. We've really got enough food to last for weeks, Deirdre.'

'We ought to get back quickly,' said Deirdre, looking at her watch. 'We'll be awfully late for breakfast - and whatever we do we mustn't be seen coming in together again.'

'Nobody's spotted us at all so far,' said Jo. 'We're lucky.'

It was true that nobody had recognized them. But somebody had seen them, far away in the distance! Bill, on her horse Thunder, and Clarissa, on Merrylegs, were out for one of their early-morning rides, and had followed a bridle path not far distant from the shack. Bill's sharp eyes caught sight of two figures going into the shack.

'Funny!' she said. 'That looks like two Malory Towers girls - same uniform. Perhaps it's two out for an early-morning walk.'

'Probably,' said Clarissa, and thought no more about it. They galloped on, and had a wonderful ride, getting back just

before Jo and Deirdre - who were careful to slip in at different gates.

They had planned to run away that night, when all the others were asleep in bed. The second-formers were surprised at Jo's behaviour that day. They had expected her to be miserable and subdued, because being ignored completely was a very hard punishment - but instead Jo was bright-eyed and cheerful, seeming not to care in the least about being sent to Coventry.

'She's a thick-skinned little beast,' said June to Felicity. June was doing a double dose of ignoring. She was not only ignoring Jo, she was ignoring Amanda! It so happened that they met quite a number of times during those few days and June took great delight in turning her back on Amanda in a very marked manner.

That night, when the girls in the second-form dormy were fast asleep, Jo got up and dressed very quietly. She took the rug off her bed, and then stole into Deirdre's dormy. Deirdre was awake, half afraid now that the time had come. For two pins she would have given up the idea entirely!

But Jo had no idea of giving it up or of allowing Deirdre to either! It wasn't long before both of them were stealing down the moonlit corridor, each with their rug over their arm. It was easy to open the garden door and go out into the grounds.

'I'm glad it's moonlight,' said Deirdre, with a half-scared laugh. 'I wouldn't like to go on a dark night. Oh, Jo - you're sure it's all right? You're sure your people won't mind my turning up with you?'

'Oh no. They'll welcome you as my friend,' said Jo. 'And they'll laugh at our adventure, I know they will. They'll think

it's wonderful!'

They got to the shack at last. All their food was still there. They spread the rugs on the floor and lay down to sleep. It was quite warm, but for some time neither of them could sleep. In the end Jo broke open a packet of biscuits and they munched steadily. Deirdre fell asleep first, and then Jo found her eyes closing.

What would the girls think tomorrow? They'd be sorry they'd driven her away! thought Jo. Miss Parker would be sorry for the nasty things she had said. So would Mam'zelle. So would . . . But Jo was now fast asleep, and never even heard a little hedgehog scuttling across the floor of the shack.

Nobody took any notice of the girls' empty beds in the morning, it was quite usual for someone to get up early for a walk or a swim. The first- and second-formers clattered down to breakfast, chattering as usual.

But before long, the news went round the school. 'Jo's gone! Deirdre's gone! Nobody knows where they are. They've hunted everywhere for them!'

The second-formers couldn't help feeling rather guilty. Had their punishment sent Jo off? No - she had so very very often said she would run away! All the same - perhaps she had run away because she couldn't stand being sent to Coventry - and taken weak little Deirdre with her. What would happen? Where on earth had they go to?

The police were told. Miss Grayling rang up Mr Jones and informed him that his daughter was missing, but they hoped to find her, and also a girl she had taken with her, at any moment. They couldn't have gone far.

Miss Grayling was amazed at Mr Jones's reception of her news. She had expected him to be upset and worried, perhaps to reproach the school for not taking more care of Jo. But down the telephone came a bellow of laughter.

'Ha, ha, ha! If that isn't exactly like our Jo! She's just like me, you know. The times I played truant from school! Don't you worry about our Jo, Miss Grayling. She knows how to look after herself all right. Maybe she's on her way home. I'll telephone you if she arrives.'

'Mr Jones - the police have been informed,' said Miss Grayling, disgusted at the way Jo's father had taken her news. 'I will try to keep it out of the papers as long as I can, of course.'

'Oh, don't you bother about that,' said the surprising Mr Jones. 'I'd like to see our Jo hitting the headlines in a spot of adventure. Great girl, isn't she?'

He was surprised to hear the click of the receiver being put down firmly at Miss Grayling's end. 'What's the matter with her?' he wondered. 'Cutting me off like that. Hey, Ma - where are you? What do you think our Jo's done?'

A very disturbing piece of news came to Miss Grayling that morning, it came from the police sergeant who had been told of the missing girls. After Miss Grayling had spoken about them and given their descriptions, the sergeant cleared his throat and spoke rather awkwardly.

Er - about that other matter you reported a short while ago. Miss Grayling.' he said. The notes that were taken from your Matron's sale. You remember Matron

knew the numbers printed on the notes - they were in a sequence. Well we've traced them.'

'Oh,' said Miss Grayling. 'Do you know who the thief is, then?'

'Well, Mam, yes, in a way we do,' said the sergeant. 'Those notes were given in at two shops in the town, by a Malory Towers girl. She came in with another girl and bought a whole lot of food - tins and tins of it.'

Miss Grayling's heart sank. She covered her eyes. Not a Malory Towers girl! Could there possibly be a thief like that among the girls?

'Thank you, sergeant,' she said at last. 'I will make enquiries as to which girls they were. Good morning.'

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It was soon quite clear that it was Jo and Deirdre who had done the shopping. Everything came out bit by bit. Matron told how she found the five pound notes and knew that they belonged to Jo. Jo had never claimed them.

The second-formers related that Jo meant to buy food for a birthday feast. Miss Parker added the bit about Deirdre going out with a second-former, and how she had not been able to



make that second-former own up. ut, she said, there is no doubt at all but that it was Jo.'

'Yes/ said Miss Grayling, seeing the whole miserable story now. Jo had gone to Matron's room to get back her own money and had taken more than she meant to - and then had been too afraid to put it back. Then trouble had come, and fear and misery had caused Jo to run away. Silly, ill-brought-up, spoiled little Jo!

'Mostly her parents' fault, of course.' said Miss Grayling to Matron. 'Nothing to be done there, I'm afraid. They're no help to her.'

There was a knock at the door. Bill and Clarissa wore outside.

They had remembered the two figures they had seen near the old shack the morning before. Could they have been Jo and Deirdre?

'Quite likely/ said Miss Grayling. They may have hidden their food there, and be camping out. Do you know the way?'

'Oh yes / s a i d Bill. ' We often ride out there. We ■'■'·iight it would reallv he quickest for us to ride our on

Thunder and Merrylegs, Miss Grayling, and see il the two girls are there.'

'Miss Peters can go too, on her horse,' said Miss Grayling. 'If the girls are there, she can bring them back.'

So the three riders set off, and rode over the fields and hills till they came to the bridle path that led near the shack. Jo and Deirdre, sitting inside the shack having their fourth 'snack' that morning, heard the hooves. Deirdre peeped out.

'It's Bill and Clarissa,' she said, darting back, looking scared. 'And Miss Peters.'

'They can't guess we're here,' said Jo, in a panic.

But they had guessed, of course, and very soon the three of them dismounted, and Miss Peters walked to the shack. She looked inside. She saw Jo and Deirdre, looking very dirty and untidy and frightened, crouching in a corner

'So there you are,' she said. 'What a pair of idiots. Come out, at once, please. We've had enough of this nonsense.'

Like two frightened puppies, Jo and Deirdre crept out of the shed. Bill and Clarissa looked at them.

'So it was you we saw yesterday,' said Bill. 'What are you playing at? Red Indians or something?'

'Bill! Shall we get into awful trouble?' asked Deirdre, looking rather white. She had not enjoyed the night in the shack. A wind had blown in, and she had felt cold in the early morning. She had awakened and had not been able to sleep again. Also there seemed to be rather a nasty smell of some sort in the shack - perhaps it was mice, thought Deirdre, who was terrified of them.

Bill looked at the pale Deirdre and felt sorry for her. She was only a first-former, just thirteen years old, and a timid, weak little thing-just the type that Jo would pick on to boast to, and persuade to do wrong.

'Look,. Deirdre - you've been an idiot, and you might have caused a lot of worry and trouble, if it hadn't happened that Clarissa and I spotted you the other day, when you were here,' said Bill. 'It's a mercy it hasn't got into the papers yet. The best thing you can do is to be absolutely straight and

honest about it, and to be really sorry, and promise to turn over a new leaf. Then I dare say you'll get another chance.'

'Shall I be expelled?' asked Deirdre, panic-stricken at the thought. 'My father would be awfully upset. I haven't got a mother.'

'I shouldn't think you'd be sent away,' said Bill, kindly. 'You've not got a bad name, so far as I know. Come on now. You can get up on Thunder, behind me.'

Deirdre was frightened of horses, but she was even more frightened of disobeying Bill, and getting into further trouble. She climbed up on Thunder, and Jo was taken on Miss Peters' horse. Miss Peters said only a few words to the dirty bedraggled Jo.

'Running away from things is never any good,' she said. 'You can't run away from difficulties. You only take them with you. Remember that, Jo. Now hang on to me and we'll go.'

They got back just about break-time. The sound of hooves was heard as they came up the drive, and the girls ran to see if Jo and Deirdre were being brought back. They looked in silence at the dirty, bedraggled, sorry-looking pair!

The two were taken straight to Miss Grayling. Deirdre was now in a state of utter panic. However could she have gone with Jo! What would her father say? She was all he had got, and now he would be ashamed and sorry because she had brought disgrace on the fine school he had sent her to.

Tears streamed down her cheeks, and before Miss Grayling could say a word, Deirdre poured out all she was feeling.

Miss Grayling, I'm sorry. Don't tell my father, please,

please, don't. He trusts me, and I'm all he's got. Miss Grayling, don't send me away. I'll never, never do such a thing again, I promise you. I can't think why I did it. If only you'll give me another chance, I'll do my best. Miss Grayling, please believe me!'

Miss Grayling knew real repentance when she saw it. This was not someone trying to get out of trouble, it was someone shocked by what she had done, someone thinking now of the effect it might have on somebody she loved - someone with an earnest desire to turn over a new leaf!

'I'll show you that I mean what I say,' went on Deirdre, beseechingly, rubbing away her tears with a very grubby hand, and streaking her face with dirt. 'Give me all the hard punishments you like, I'll do them. But please don't tell my father. He's a sailor, and he would never run away. He'd be so ashamed of me.'

'Running away never gets us anywhere,' said Miss Grayling, gravely, 'it is the coward's way. Facing up to things is the hero's way. I shall think what I am to do with you, and tell you later on in the morning. I am sure that whatever I decide you will accept, and face bravely.'

She turned and glanced at Matron, who was sitting quietly knitting in a corner of the big room.

'Will you take Deirdre now?' she said. 'She wants a bath, to begin with, and clean clothes. Don't let her go into class this morning. Give her some job to do with you, will you? When she's in a calmer state of mind I'll talk to her again.'

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Matron, calm, kindly and efficient, put her knitting into her bag. 'Come along, my girl,' she said to Deirdre. 'I'll soon deal with you. I never did see such a grubby first-former in my life, A hot bath and clean clothes will make you ieel a lot better. And after that you can help me to tidy out my linen cupboard. That'll keep you busy! Keep you out of mischief too!'

She took the girl's arm in a kindly way, and Deirdre heaved a sigh of relief. She was always scared of Matron, hut suddenly she seemed a real rock, someone to lean on - almost like a mother, thought Deirdre, who had missed a mother very much indeed. She kept close to Matron as she hurried her away. She longed to ask her if she thought the Head would expel her, but she was afraid of the answer. Poor Deirdre. She was not meant for escapades ol any sort.

Jo had been standing silent all this time, fearful ol saying a word. Miss Grayling looked at her. T am expecting your lather in ten minutes' time,' she said, 'or 1 would send you to have a bath too. But it would be better to wait now, till fie comes.'

Jo's heart lifted. So her father would soon be here. He wouldn't be cross about this. It would tickle him. He ■.\nuld laugh and joke about ii, and tell all his friends about the latest thing his Jo had done. He would put things right!

Jo heaved a sigh of relief. 'Sit down,' said Miss Grayling. 'We will discuss this miserable affair with your father when he arrives. I sent for him as soon as I heard from Bill and Clarissa that they knew where you were hiding.'

Miss Grayling began writing a letter. Jo sat still. She wished she didn't look so dirty. She had a great hole in her tunic, and her bare knees were filthy.

In ten minutes' time an enormous car roared up the drive. Daddy! thought Jo, He hasn't been long! The car came to a stop with a screeching of brakes. Someone got out and the car door was slammed loudly.

Soon Mr Jones appeared at the sitting-room door. He came in, beaming. 'So you found that rascal, did you?' he said. 'Why, here she is! Just like you, Jo, to go off like that. She's a scamp, isn't she. Miss Grayling?'

Won't you sit down?' said Miss Grayling, in a

remarkably cool voice. 'I want to discuss this matter with you, Mr Jones. We take a serious view of it, I am afraid. It is fortunate that it did not get into the papers.'

'Yes, but look here - what's so serious about it?' exploded Mr Jones, 'It was just a bit of fun - Jo's a high-spirited girl - nothing wrong about her at all!'

'There is a lot wrong,' said Miss Grayling. 'So much so, Mr Jones, that I want you to take Jo away with you today - and I regret to say that we cannot have her back. She is not a good influence in the school.'

Mr Jones had never in his life had such a sudden and unpleasant surprise. He sat with his mouth falling open,

hardly able to believe his ears. Jo - Jo expelled! They wanted him to take her away and not bring her back? Why? WHY?

Jo was shocked and horrified. She gave a gulp and stared at her father. He found his voice at last.

He began to bluster. 'Yes, but look here, you can't do that - you know it was only a bit of fun. I grant you Jo shouldn't have done it - caused a lot of trouble and all that - and she shouldn't have taken the other kid with her either. But - but you can't expel her for that, surely!'

'We could, Mr Jones, if we thought she was an undesirable influence,' said Miss Grayling. 'It doesn't often happen, of course - in fact, very, very rarely. But in this case it is going to happen. You see - it isn't only the running away - it's a little matter of the taking of some money.'

Jo covered her face. She could have dropped through the floor. So Miss Grayling knew all about that too! Her father looked dumbfounded. He stood up and looked down at Miss Grayling, and his voice shook.

'What do you mean? You can't say my Jo is a thief! You can't! I don't believe it. She's always had heaps of money.'

Miss Grayling said nothing. She merely indicated Jo, who still sat with her face covered, bending forward with

tears soaking between her fingers. Her father stared at her, aghast.

'Jo,' he said, in a voice that had suddenly gone hoarse. 'Jo - you didn't, oh you didn't! I can't believe it!'

Jo could only nod her head. That awful, awful money! There was still the rest of it pinned in her blouse. She could feel it

rustling when she moved. She suddenly pulled it out. She put it in front of Miss Grayling. 'That's all that's left,' she said. 'But I'll pay the rest back.'

'Let me pay everything, everything - I'll double it!' said Mr Jones, in the same hoarse voice. 'To think of Jo - my Jo - taking money!'

Both the bold brazen Jo and the once blustering bumptious man looked at Miss Grayling miserably and humbly. She was sorry for them both.

'I think there is no need to say any more,' she said, quietly 'I don't want any explanations from Jo. You can get those from her, if you wish. But you will see, Mr Jones, that I cannot keep Jo here any longer. She had a line chance at Malory Towers, and she didn't take it. And I think I should say this to you - her parents are partly to blame. You didn't give Jo the backing-up and the help that she needed.'

'No, you didn't, Dad!' cried Jo, sobbing. 'You said it didn't matter if I was bottom of the form - YOU always were! You said I needn't bother about rules, I could break them all if I liked. You said so long as I had a good time, that was the only thing that mattered. And it wasn't, it wasn't.'

Mr Jones stood still and silent. He turned suddenly to Miss Grayling. 'I reckon Jo's right,' he said, in a voice that sounded astonished. 'And I reckon. Miss Grayling, that you might have given Jo another chance if you'd thought I'd see things the right way - and I didn't. Come on, Jo - we've got to get things straight between us o'line on home, now.'

He held out his hand, and Jo took it, gulping. Mr Jones held out his hand to Miss Grayling and spoke with unexpected dignity.



'Good-bye, Miss Grayling. I reckon I'm the one that's really at fault, not Jo. You won't spread this matter about, will you - for Jo's sake? About the money, I mean.'

'Of course not,' said Miss Grayling, shaking hands. 'And Mr Jones - however much you make a joke of the escapade to your friends, and gloss over the fact that Jo has been expelled - I do beg of you not to make a joke of it with Jo. This is a serious thing. It may be the turning-point in her life, for good or for bad - and she has a right to expect that her parents will show her the right road.'

In a few minutes' time the big car roared off down the road. Jo was gone - gone for ever from Maiory Towers. One of the failures, who perhaps in the future might be a success, if only her parents backed her up.

How important parents are! thought Miss Grayling. Really, I think somebody should start a School for Parents too!

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Deirdre was not expelled. Her real fault had been weakness, and that could be dealt with. When she heard that she was to stay on, she could have sung for joy. She was shocked about Jo, but secretly relieved to be free of her strong, dominating influence.

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The whole school was shocked too. It was so very rare for any girl to be expelled - but everyone agreed that Jo was impossible.

'Poor kid,' said Mary-Lou. 'Who could be decent with idiotic parents like that - throwing money about all over the place, boasting, thick-skinned, trying to make Jo as had as themselves. Well - it was one of Malory Towers' experiments that went wrong.'

'I must say I'd rather have a generous parent like Jo's than a mean one like mine, though,' put in Gwen. 'Jo's father would never have grudged her an extra year at a finishing school.'

'You've got a bee in your bonnet about that,' said Alicia. And let me tell you, it buzzes too loudly and too often. Your father's worth ten of Jo's - oh, not in money, but in the things that matter!'

'That was a very nasty business about Jo,' said Darrell. I'm glad it's over. Now perhaps we'll have a bit of peace without any more alarms and excursions!'

This was, of course, a foolish thing to say. Things began to happen almost immediately!

Amanda had decided that the tide would be right to swim out to sea the next morning. She was looking

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forward to it eagerly. A good long swim at last!

She was in a small, sixth-form dormy, with only three others. All the others were very sound sleepers - Moira, Sally and Bill. She could easily creep out without waking them. She didn't mean to tell any of them what she was going to do, or what she had done, when she had had her long swim! They

were so keen on rules being kept - but such rules, thought Amanda, really didn't apply to a future Olympic swimmer!

She got up at half-past four in the morning. It was dawn, and the sky was full of silvery light. Soon it would change to gold and pink as the sun came up. It would be a heavenly day!

She went quietly out. There wasn't a sound to be heard in the whole of the school. Amanda was soon standing by the pool, stripping off her clothes. She had on her swimming-costume underneath. She had a dip in the pool first - lovely! Her strong arms thrashed through the water, and her strong body revelled in it. She turned on her back for a few minutes and dreamed of the next year, when she would win the swimming at the Olympic Games. She pictured the crowds, she heard the roar of cheering and the sound of hundreds of people clapping.

It was a very pleasant picture. Amanda enjoyed it. Then she climbed out of the pool and made her way down to the edge of the rocks. The waves came pounding in there, although further out it was very calm. Amanda looked out to the brilliant blue sea and sky. She dived cleanly into a deep pool and swam through a channel there, and was suddenly out in the open sea.

At last! she thought, as her arms cleaved the water and her legs shot her steadily forward. At last I am really swimming again!

She went in the direction she had planned. The sun rose a little higher in the sky and shone down. It was going to be a hot day. Little sparkles came on the water,

and Amanda laughed for joy. Splash, splash, splash - she swam on and on, part of the sea itself.

Nobody had seen her go. She planned to be back before anyone came down for an early-morning swim. At the earliest that would be seven o'clock. She had plenty of time.

But someone came down before seven o'clock that morning. June woke up early and could not get off to sleep again. The sun shone right on her face. She glanced at her clock. Six o'clock. Gosh - ages before the dressing-bell went. She sat up and pulled her dressing-gown towards her.

I'll go down and have a swim, she thought. A real swim in the pool, not just fooling about, like I've been doing since I had that row with Amanda. I'll see if I've remembered all her rules.

She went softly down the stairs and out into the sun-drenched grounds. She was soon down by the pool, and went to find her swimming-costume, which she had left there to dry. She pulled it on. Then into the pool she went with a neat dive.

It was glorious there - and lovely to have it all to herself. Usually it was so crowded. June floated lazily. Then she began to swim. Yes - she had remembered everything that Amanda had taught her. She shot through the water at top speed, her lithe body as supple as a fish. Up and down she went, tip and down, till she was tired out.

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She climbed out to have a rest and sit in the sun. She decided to go down to the edge of the sea, and let the waves splash her as she sat on the rocks. So down she went, and found a high shelf of rock to sit on, where waves could just splash over her legs.

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She gazed idly out to sea. What a marvellous blue - a Kind of delphinium blue, June decided And then her ves suddenly fastened on a little black bob. some wav

out to sea. Could it be a buoy, fastened there to show a hidden rock? June had never noticed it before.

Then she saw what looked like a white arm raised. She leaped to her feet. Goodness gracious - it was a swimmer! Out there, caught by the current, someone was swimming desperately to prevent themselves being forced on to the rocks some way along.

June stood still, her heart suddenly beating fast. She watched intently. It was a swimmer, though she couldn't make out whether it was a man or a woman. Did he or she know the current had caught him, and was dragging him to the rocks, where waves were pounding high?

Yes. Amanda knew. Amanda felt the strong, swift current beneath her. How could she ever have laughed at it? It was stronger than ten swimmers, than twenty swimmers! It pulled at her relentlessly, and no matter how she swam against ii, it swept her in the opposite direction.

Amanda was very tired. Her great strength had been used for a long time now against the treacherous current of water. She saw with panic that she was being taken nearer and nearer to the rocks she had been warned against. She would

have no chance if one of those great waves took her and flung her on them - she would be shattered at once!

June saw that the swimmer was trying to swim against the current. She knew it was hopeless. What could she do? Had she time to run back to school, warn someone and get them to telephone for help? No, she hadn't.

There's only one thing to do. thought June. Just one chance! The boat! If I can get to the boat-house in time, drag out the boat, and cut the swimmer off before he gets on the rocks, I might save him. Just a chance!

She tore off to the little boat-house in her swimming-costume. It was some way along the shore, in a place free of rocks and pounding waves. June found the key,

unlocked the door and tried to drag out one of the little boats the girls sometimes used, when old Tom the boatman could be persuaded to take them for a row.

Even this little boat was heavy. June tugged at it and pushed - and at last it reached the water, and took off on a wave. June sprang in and caught up the oars. She began to row at top speed, but soon had to slacken, because she was so out of breath. She glanced round to spot the swimmer.

There he was - no, it must be a she, because it had longish hair, wet and draggled. What an idiot! June pulled strongly at the oars, horrified to see that the swimmer was being swept very near the rocks now.

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The sea was calm, fortunately, so the waves that pounded the rocks were not so tremendous as usual. June yelled to the swimmer.

'AHOY THERE! AHOY!'

The swimmer didn't hear. Amanda was almost spent. Her arms were now hardly moving. She could fight against the current no longer.

'AHOY!' yelled June again. This time Amanda heard. She turned her head. A boat! Oh, what a blessed, beautiful sight! But could she possibly get to it, or it to her, in time?

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The boat came on. A wave suddenly took Amanda strongly in its grasp, swelled up and flung her forward. A hidden rock struck her leg, and she cried out in agony.

Gosh - she's almost on the rocks, thought June, in a panic. She rowed wildly, and at last reached the swimmer, who was now allowing herself to float, unable to swim a stroke.

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June reached out to her over the side of the boat. It's Amanda! she realized, with a shock of amazement. Well, ■- \\o would have thought she'd be such an idiot?

Miraculously the swell subsided for a minute or two, and June pulled at Amanda. 'Come on - help \uurseU

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up!' she shouted. 'Buck up!'

How Amanda ever got into the boat she didn't know. Neither did June. It seemed impossible, for Amanda had a badly hurt leg and arm. But somehow it was done, and at last she lay in the bottom of the boat, exhausted, trembling, and in pain. She muttered thanks, but beyond that could not utter a word.

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June found that she now had to pull against the current. She was tired already and soon realized it was impossible. But help was not far off. Some early-morning swimmers in the pool had spotted the boat, and one bright fourth-former had fetched a pair of binoculars. As soon as it was seen that the boat was in difficulties, old Tom was sent for - and now here was his small outboard motor-boat chugging along to rescue the two exhausted girls!

They were soon on shore. Matron had been fetched, as soon as June had been recognized through the glasses. No one had spotted Amanda at first, as she was in the bottom of the boat. The girls crowded round, and cried out in horror.

'Oh, look at Amanda's leg and her poor arm! Oh, isn't it terrible!'



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Again the news flew round the school like wildfire! Amanda went swimming out to sea and got caught in the current! June went down to swim in the pool and saw her. She got the little boat and rescued her - but Amanda's badly hurt.'

'Fancy June rescuing her bitter enemy!' said the lower-formers. 'Good old June! She's collapsed, Matron says. They are both in the san.'

June soon recovered. She had been completely exhausted, and that and the panic she had felt had knocked her out for a few hours. Then she suddenly sat up and announced that she felt quite all right, could she get up, please?

Not yet,' said Matron. 'Lie down. I don't want to speak severely to such a brilliant life-saver, but I might, if you don't do what you're told! You certainly saved Amanda's life.'

'How is Amanda?' asked June, shivering as she remembered Amanda's terrible leg and arm - bruised and swollen and cut.

'She's not too good,' said Matron. 'Her arm isn't so bad - but the muscles of the leg have been terribly torn. On a rock, I suppose.'

June lay silent. 'Matron - will it - will this mean Amanda can't swim or play games any more this term?'

'It may mean more than that,' said Matron. 'It may mean the end of all swimming and games for her - unless the muscles do their job and heal up marvellously.'

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'Bui - Amanda was going in for the Olympic Games next year,' said June. 'She was good enough, too, Matron.'

'I know all that,' said Matron. 'It's a bad thing this, June. When a person has been given strength and health and a wonderful gift for games, and throws it all away for an hour's forbidden pleasure, it's a tragedy. What that poor girl is thinking of, lying there, I don't like to imagine.'

June didn't like to imagine it, either. How terrible for Amanda! And to think she had brought it on herself too - that must be even more terrible.

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'Can I go and see Amanda?' she asked Matron, suddenly.

'Not today,' said Matron. 'And let me tell you this, June - I know about your clash with Amanda, and I don't care who's right or who's wrong. That girl will want a bit of help and sympathy, so don't you go and see her if you can't be generous enough to give her a bit. You saved her life - that's a great thing. Now you can do a little thing, and make it up with her.'

'I'm going to,' said June. 'You're an awful preacher, Matron. I can't imagine why I like you.'

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'The feeling is mutual!' said Matron. 'Now, will you please lie down properly?'

June found herself a heroine when she at last got up and went back to school! There were cheers as she came rather awkwardly into the common-room, suddenly feeling unaccountably shy. Susan clapped her on the back, Felicity pumped her right arm up and down, Nora pumped her left.

'Good old June!' chanted the girls. 'Good - old - JUNE!'

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'Do shut up/ said June. 'What's the news? I feel as if I've been away for ages. Played any tricks up in the sixth form yet?'

Good gracious, no! We've been thinking and talking

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of nothing else hut you and Amanda!' said Felicity. 'We haven't once thought of tricks. But we ought to now - just to celebrate your bravery!'

T wish you wouldn't be an ass/ said June. 'I happened to be there, and saw Amanda in difficulties, that's all. It might have been anyone else.'

But the second-formers would not hide their pride in June. Alicia was pleased and proud too. She came down to clap her small cousin on the back.

'Good work, June,' she said. 'But - it's jolly bad luck on Amanda, isn't it? Out of all games for the rest of the term - and maybe no chance for the Olympic Games next year either.'

No one said, or even thought, that it served Amanda right for her conceit, and tor her continual boasting of her prowess. Not even the lower-formers said it, though none ol them had liked Amanda. Her misfortune roused their pity. Perhaps the only person in the school who came nearest to

thinking that it served Amanda right was the French girl, Suzanne, who had detested Amanda for her brusque ways, and for her contempt of Suzanne herself.

But then Suzanne could not possibly understand why Amanda had gone for that long swim, nor could she understand the bitter disappointment of being out of all games for so long.

June was as good as her word. She went to see Amanda as soon as she was allowed to, taking with her a big box of crystallized ginger.

'Hallo, Amanda,' she said, 'how's things?'

'Hallo, June,' said Amanda, who looked pale and exhausted still. 'Oh, I say - thanks for the ginger/

Matron went out of the room. Amanda turned to June quickly. 'June - I'm not much good at thanking people - but thanks for all you did. I'll never forget it.'

'Now I'll say something/ said June. 'And I'll say it for ! he two of us and then we won't mention it again. We

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were both idiots over the coaching, both of us. I wish the row hadn't happened, but it did. It was fifty-fifty, really. Let's forget it.'

'You might have been in both the second teams,' said Amanda, regretfully.

'I'm going to be!' said June. 'I mean to be! I'm going to practise like anything again - and will you believe it, Moira's

offered to time me at swimming each day, and stand and serve me balls at tennis each afternoon!'

Amanda brightened at once. 'That's good,' she said. 'June - I shan't mind things quite so much - being out of everything, I mean - if you will get into the second teams. I shan't feel I'm completely wasted then.'

'Right,' said June. 'I'll do my best.'

'And there's another thing,' said Amanda. 'I'm going to spend my time coaching the lower-formers when I'm allowed up. I am to have my leg in plaster and then I can hobble about. I shan't be able to play games myself, but I shall at least be able to see that others play them well.'

'Right,' said June again. 'I'll pick out a few winners for you, Amanda, so that they'll be ready for you when you get up!'

'Time to go, June,' said Matron, bustling in again. 'You'll tire Amanda with all your gabble. But, dear me - she looks much brighter! You'd better come again, June.'

'I'm going to,' said June, departing with a grin. 'Don't eat all Amanda's ginger, Matron. I know your little ways!'

'Well, of all the cheeky young scamps!' said Matron, laughing. But June had gone.

Matron was pleased to see Amanda looking so much brighter. 'June's just like Alicia, that wicked cousin of hers,' she said. 'Yes, and Alicia is just like her mother. I had her mother here, too, when she was a girl. Dear, dear, I must be getting old. The tricks Alicia's mother used to play too. It's a wonder my hair isn't snow-white!'

She left Amanda for an afternoon sleep. But Amanda

didn't sleep. She lay thinking. What long long thoughts come to those in bed, ill and in pain! Amanda sorted a lot of things out, during the time she was ill.

Nobody pointed out to her that pride always comes before a fall, but she pointed it out a hundred times to herself. Nobody pointed out that when you had fallen, what really mattered was not the fall, but the getting up again and going on. Amanda meant to get up again and go on. She meant to make up for many many things.

And if my leg muscles never get strong enough for me to play games really well again, I shan't moan and groan, she thought. After all, it's courage that matters, not the things that happen to you. It doesn't really matter what happens, so long as you've got plenty of pluck to face it. courage. Pluck. Well, I have got those. I'll be a games- mistress if I can't go in for games myself. I like coaching and I'm good at it. It will be second-best but I'm lucky to have a second-best.

And so, when she got up and hobbled around, Amanda was welcomed everywhere by the lower- formers, all anxious to shine in her eyes, and to show her that they were sorry for her having to limp about. Amanda marvelled at their short memories. They've forgotten already that I never bothered to help anyone but June, she thought. She gave all her extra time to the eager youngsters, the time that normally she would have had for playing games herself, if it hadn't been for her leg.

'She's really a born games teacher!' the games- mistress said to Miss Peters. 'And now she's taken June on again, and June is so remarkably docile, that kid will be in the second teams in no time!'

So she was, of course, unanimously voted there by -Moir, Sally and Darrell. Amanda felt a prick of pride - but a different kind of pride from the kind she had felt before. This time it was a pride in someone else, not

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The next thing that happened was a good deal pleasanter. The Higher Certificate girls had sat for their exam and at last had got it behind them. They had gone about looking harassed and pale, but made a miraculous recovery immediately the last exam was over,

'And now/ said Alicia, 'I feel I want a bit of relaxation. I want to be silly and laugh till my sides crack! What wouldn't I give to be a second-former just now, and play a few mad tricks on somebody.'

And then the tricks had happened. They were, of course, planned by the irrepressible second-formers, particularly



June and Felicity, who had both been sorry for Darrell and Alicia during their hard exam week.

These two had put their heads together, and had produced a series of exceedingly well-planned tricks. They told the other second-formers, who giggled helplessly.

'These tricks all depend on perfect timing,' said June. 'One we already know - the hair-pin trick - the other is one I've sent for, that I saw advertised in my latest trick booklet.' June had a perfect library of these, and although they were always being confiscated, they were also being continually added to by the indefatigable June.

'We didn't think the hair-pin trick was quite played -lit, yet,' said Felicity. 'It still has possibilities. But we 'bought we'd combine it with another trick, which will amaze the sixth-formers as well as Mam'zelle.'

'Good, good, good!' said the eager listeners. 'What ■h?'

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June explained lucidly. 'Well, listen. See these pellets? They are perfectly ordinary pellets till they're wetted - and then, exactly a quarter of an hour after they're wetted, they swell up into a kind of snake-thing - and they hiss!'

'Hiss?' said Nora, her eyes gleaming. 'What do you mean - hiss?'

'Well, don't you know what "hiss" means?' said June. 'Like this!' And she hissed so violently at Nora that she shrank back in alarm.

'But how am they hiss?' she asked.

'I don't know. It's just part of the trick,' said June, impatiently. 'They're wetted - they swell up into funny white snakes - and as they swell, they hiss. In fact, they make a remarkably loud hissing noise! I've got one wetted ready on that desk, so that you can see it working in a few minutes.'

'Oooh,' said the second-formers, in delight.

June went on: 'What I propose to do is to send one of us into the sixth form when Mam'zelle is taking it, and withdraw her hair-pins with the magnet,' said June. 'She'll miss them and rush out to do her hair again. In the meantime, up the chimney there will be one of these pellets, ready wetted - and by it will be a tiny pin-cushion. But instead of pins, it will have hair-pins - just like Mam'zelle's - stuck into it!'

'I see the trick, I see it!" said Katherine, her eyes dancing. 'By the time Mam'zelle has come back and is settled down, the pellet-snake will come out, and began to hiss like anything - and everyone will hear it . . .'

'Yes,' said Felicity, 'and when they go to hunt for the hissing noise, just up the chimney they will find - the little cushion stuck full of Mam'zelle's hair-pins!'

'But won't they see the snake?' asked Nora.

'No - because it lies into the finest powder when it's liquid.' said (inn- h can't often be seen That's the

beauty of it. They'll take down the cushion, and won't they gape! I can see my cousin Alicia wondering what it's all about!'

'That's not all,' said Felicity. There's still some more. One of us goes into the room again and takes out Mam'zelle's second lot of hair-pins - she'll have done her hair again you

see - and we'll slip another wetted pellet just behind the blackboard ledge - with another little cushion of hair-pins!'

The second-formers shrieked at this. Oh, to be up in the sixth form when all this happened!

'And the snake will come out, hidden behind the blackboard, on the ledge, and will hiss like fury,' said June. 'And when the hissing is tracked there, they'll find a hair-pin cushion againV

'Priceless,' said Harriet.

'Smashing!' said N'oa.

'It's really quite ingenious,' said June, modestly. 'Felicity and I thought it out together. Anyway it will be a real treat for the poor old jaded sixth form, after their week of exams.'

They found out when Mam'zelle was taking a French lesson in the afternoon again. It had to be a time when the second-formers were free, or could go swimming or play tennis. It would be easy to arrange To slip up at the correct times then.

'Wednesday, a quarter to three,' reported June, after examining the time-tables of her form and the sixth. 'Couldn't be better. Nora, you can go in first with the magnet. And, Felicity, you're going in next, aren't you?'

'Go in first,' said Felicity. 'Who will wet the pellet and put it up the chimney before the class begins?'

'I will,' said June. So, when Wednesday afternoon urn', there was much excitement and giggling among the second-formers. Miss Parker wondered what they were up to now. But it was so hot that she really couldn't bother to find out.

June disappeared upstairs just before a quarter to three with the wetted pellet and the little cushion of pins. There was a tiny shelf a little way up the chimney and she carefully placed the pellet at the back and the cushion just in front. Then she fled.

The class filed in a few minutes later. Mam'zelle arrived. Then Felicity entered, panting. 'Oh please, Mam'zelle, here is a note for you,' she said, and put the envelope down in front of Mam'zelle. The name on it had been written by June, in disguised handwriting. It said 'Mam'zelle Rougier'.

'Why, Felicity, my child, do you not know by now that my name is Mam'zelle Dupont, not Rougier?' said Mam'zelle. 'This is for the other Mam'zelle. Take it to her in the fifth form.'

Felicity was a little behind Mam'zelle. The class looked at her suspiciously. Why the enormous grin on the second-former's face? They soon saw the magnet being held for a few seconds behind Mam'zelle's head. Then Felicity hid the magnet - and its hair-pins - in her hand, took the note, and departed hurriedly.

It was done so quickly that the sixth form gaped. Mam'zelle sensed almost immediately that something was wrong with her hair. She put up her hand, and gave a wail.

'Oh la la\ Here is my hair undone again!'

And once again she searched in vain for her hair-pins. Knowing from her experience the first time that she would probably not find a single one. she left the room to do her hair, puzzled and bewildered. What was the matter with her hair these days - and her pins too? Mam'zelle seriously considered whether or not it would be advisable to have her hair cut short!

She rushed into her room, did her hair again and stuffed her bun with hair-pins, driving them in viciously as if to dare them to come out! Then she rushed back to the class, patting her bun cautiously.

The hissing began just as she sat down. Up the chimney the wetted pellet was evolving into a sort of snake, and giving out a loud and insistent hissing noise.

'Ssss-ssss-SSSSSSSS-sss!'

The sixth-formers lifted their heads. 'What is this noise?' asked Mam'zelle, impatiently. 'Alicia, is it you til at heesses?'

'No, I don't heess,' said Alicia, with a grin. 'It's probably some noise outside, Mam'zelle.'

'It isn't,' said Moira. 'It's in this room. I'm sure it is.'

The hissing grew louder. 'SSSSSSSSSSSSSS!'

'It sounds like a snake somewhere,' said Darrell. They hiss just like that. I hope it's not an adder!'

Mam'zelle sprang up with a scream. 'A snake. No, no. There could not be a snake in here.'

'Well, what on earth is it, then?' said Sally, puzzled. They all listened in silence.

'SSSSS-sssss-sss-SSS,' said the pellet, loudly and insistently, as the chemicals inside it worked vigorously, pushing out the curious snake-like formation.

Alicia got up. 'I'm going to track it down,' she said. 'It's somewhere near the fireplace.'

She went down on hands and knees and listened. 'It's up the chimney!' she exclaimed in surprise. 'I'll put my hand up and see what's there.'

'No, no, Alicia! Do not do that!' almost squealed Mam'zelle, in horror. 'There is a snake!'

But Alicia was groping up the chimney, pretty certain there was no snake. Her hand closed on something and she pulled it down the chimney.

'Good gracious!' she said, in an astounded voice. Look here - your hair-pins, Mam'zelle - in a cushion !or you!'

The sixth-formers couldn't believe their eyes. How could Mam'zelle's hair-pins appear miraculously up the chimney, when nobody had gone near the chimney to put them there? And what had made the hissing noise?

'Anyone got a torch?' said Alicia. 'Hallo - the hissing has stopped.'

So it had. The pellet was exhausted. The snake had fallen into the finest of fine powder. When Alicia switched on the torch and shone it up on the little chimney-shelf, there was absolutely nothing to be seen.

Mam'zelle was very angry. She raged and stormed. 'Ah, non, non, nonY she cried. 'It is not good of you, Alicia, this! Are you not the sixth form? C'est abominable] What behaviour! First you take all my hair-pins, then you put them in a cushion, then you hide them up the chimney, and you HEEEEESS!'

'We didn't hiss, Mam'zelle,' protested Darrell 'ft wasn't us hissing. And how could we do all that without you seeing us?'

But Mam'zelle evidently thought they were quite capable of doing such miraculous things, and was perfectly certain Alicia or someone had played her a most complicated trick. She snatched at the pin-cushion and threw it violently into the waste-paper basket.

'Abominable!' she raged. 'ABOMINABLE!'

The door opened in the middle of all this and in came Nora, looking as if she could hardly control herself. She was just in time to hear Mam'zelle's yells and see her fling the pin-cushion into the basket. She almost exploded with joy and delight. So the trick had worked!

'Oh, excuse me, Mam'zelle,' she said, politely, smiling at the excited French mistress, 'but have you got a book of Miss Parker's in your desk?'

Mam'zelle was a little soothed by the sight of one of her favourites. She patted her bun to see if it was still there, plus its hair-pins, and tried to control herself. 'Wait now - I will see,' she said, and opened the desk. As June had carefully put a book of Miss Parker's there, in readiness, she had no difficulty in finding it.

And Nora, of course, had no difficulty in holding the magnet close to Mam'zelle's unfortunate bun! The sixth form saw what she was doing and gasped audibly. The cheek! Twice in one lesson! And had the hissing and the cushion been all part of the same trick? Alicia's mind began to work furiously. How had they done it, the clever little monkeys?

Nora had plenty of time to slip the little wetted pellet on the ledge that held the blackboard against the wall, and to place the tiny pin-cushion in front of it, well hidden behind the board. She managed to do this without being seen, as the lid

of the desk hid her for a moment, when Mam'zelle opened it to look inside.

Nora took the book thankfully and fled, bursting into gulps and snorts of laughter as she staggered down the corridor. Miss Potts met her and regarded her with suspicion. Now what had Nora been up to?

Nora had hardly shut the door when a familiar sensation came over Mam'zelle's head - her hair was coming down. Her bun was uncoiling! In horror she put up her hand and wailed aloud.

'Here it is again - my pins are vanished and gone - my bun, he descends!'

The girls dissolved into laughter, Mam'zelle's face of horror was too comical for words. Suzanne laughed so much that she fell off her chair to the floor. Mam'zelle rose in wrath.

'You! Suzanne! Why do you laugh so? Is it you who Dave played this treek?'

'Non, Mam'zelle, nort! I laugh only because it is so ;;iggy-hoo-leeE:EFARR!' almost wept Suzanne.

Mam'zelle was about to send Suzanne out o! the

room, when she stopped. The hissing had begun again! There ir was. 'Ssssssssssss-ssss!'

'This is too much/ said Mam'zelle, distracted, trying in vain to pin her bun up without any pins. 'It is that snake again. Alicia, look up the chimney.'

'It's not coming from the chimney this time/ said Alicia, puzzled. 'Listen, Mam'zelle. I'm sure it's not.'



They all listened. 'SSSSSSSSSSSS!' went the noise merrily. The girls looked at one another. Really, the second-formers were jolly clever - but how dared they do all this? Darrell and Alicia grimly made up their minds to have quite a lot to say to Felicity and June after this.

'Ssss-SSSS-sss!'

'It's coming from behind you, Mam'zelle, I'm sure it is,' cried Moira, suddenly. Mam'zelle gave an anguished shriek and propelled herself forward so violently that she fell over the waste-paper basket. She quite thought a snake was coming at her from behind.

Alicia shot out of her seat and went to Mam'zelle's desk, while Darrell and Sally helped Mam'zelle up. 'It's somewhere here,' muttered Alicia, hunting. 'What can it be that hisses like that?'

She tracked the noise to the ledge that held the blackboard. Cautiously she put her hand behind - and drew out another little cushion full of pins! The sixth form gaped again! Mam'zelle sank down on a chair and moaned.

'There are my pins once more,' she said. 'But who took them from my bun, who put them in that cushion? There is some invisible person in the room. Ahhhhhhh!'

There was nothing to be seen behind the blackboard at all. Once more the snake had dissolved into fine powder, and the hissing had stopped. The girls began to laugh helplessly again. Moira hissed just behind Mam'zelle and poor Mam'zelle leaped up as if she had been shot. Suzanne promptly fell off her chair again

with laughing.

The door opened and everyone jumped. Miss Potts walked in. 'Is everything all right?' she enquired, puzzled at the scene that met her eyes. 'Such peculiar noises came from here as I passed.'

Suzanne got up from the floor. The others stopped laughing. Alicia put the pin-cushion down on the desk. Mam'zelle sat down once more, trying to put up her hair.

'You don't mean to say you've lost your hair-pins again, Mam'zelle!' said Miss Potts. 'Your hair's all down.'

Mam'zelle found her voice. She poured out an excited tirade about snakes filling the corners of the room and hissing at her, about cushions appearing full of pins, about hair-pins vanishing from her hair, and then returned to the snakes once more, and began all over again.

'You come with me, Mam'zelle,' said Miss Potts soothingly. 'I'll come back and deal with this. Come along. You shall put your hair up again and you'll feel better.'

'I go to have it cut off/ said Mam'zelle. 'I go now, Miss Potts. This very instant. I tell you, Miss Potts . . .'

But what else she told Miss Potts the sixth-formers didn't know. They sank down on their chairs and laughed again. Those wicked second-formers! Even Alicia had to admit that they had done a very, very clever job!

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Nobody ticked off the second-formers after all. The sixth agreed that they had had such a wonderful laugh that afternoon that it wasn't really fair to row them. 'It was just

what I needed, after that nightmare week of exams,' said Darrell. 'Poor Mam'zelle. She's recovered now, but those wicked little second-formers hiss whenever they walk behind her - and she runs like a hare.'

'They're worse than we ever were,' said Alicia. 'And I shouldn't have thought that was possible!'

Now the term began to slide by very quickly indeed. Darrell could hardly catch at the days as they went by. Matches were played and won. Swimming tournaments were held - and won! Moria, Sally and Darrell played brilliantly and swam well - but the star was June, of course. She was in the second teams for swimming and tennis, the youngest that had ever played in them or swum.

Amanda, still hobbling about, was very proud of June. 'You see! I picked her out, and I told you she was the most promising girl in the school!' she said, exultantly, to the sixth-formers. 'She'll pay for watching and training, that child. She's marvellous!'

Sally and Darrell looked across at one another. What a different Amanda this was now. It had been decided that as she couldn't possibly be allowed to train for any games or sports for at least a year, she should stay on at Malory Towers. And now that Amanda could no longer centre her attention on her own skill and prowess she was centring it on June, and other promising youngsters. Already she had made a great difference to the standard of games among them.

'I shall be able to keep an eye on June, and on one or two others,' went on Amanda, happily. 'I'm sorry you're all leaving, though. It'll be strange without you. Won't you be sorry to go?'

'Gwen's the only one who will be glad to leave Malory Towers,' said Darrell. 'None of the others will - even though we've got college to go to - and Belinda's going to a school of art, and Irene to the Guildhall.'

'And Bill and I to our riding school,' said Clarissa, and Moira . . .'

'Oh dear,' said Darrell, interrupting. 'Let's not talk about next term yet. Let's have our last week or two still thinking we're coming back next term. We've had a lot of tips and downs this term - now let's enjoy ourselves.'

They all did - except for one girl. That was Gwen. A black afternoon came for her, one she never forgot. It came right out of the blue, when she least expected it.

Matron came to find her in the common-room. Gwen,' she said, in rather a grave voice, 'will you go to Miss Grayling's room? There is someone there to see you.'

Gwen was startled. Who would come and see her so near the end of term? She went down at once. She was amazed to see Miss Winter, her old governess, sitting timidly on a chair opposite Miss Grayling.

'Why - Miss Winter!' said Gwen, astonished. Miss Winter got up and kissed her.

'Oh, Gwen,' she said, 'oh, Gwen!' and immediately burst into tears. Gwen looked at her in alarm.

Miss Grayling spoke. 'Gwen. Miss Winter brings bad news, I'm afraid. She . . .'

'Gwen, it's your father!' said Miss Winter, dabbing her eyes. 'He's been taken dreadfully ill. He's gone to hospital. Oh,

Gwen, your mother told me this morning,  
that he won't live!

Gwen felt as if somebody had taken her heart right out of her body. She sat down blindly on a chair and stared at Miss Winter.

'Have you - have you come to fetch me to see him?' she said, with an effort. 'Shall I be - in time?'

'Oh, you can't see him,' wept Miss Winter. 'He is much, much too ill. He wouldn't know you. I've come to fetch you home to your mother. She's in such a state, Gwen. I can't do anything with her, not a thing! Can you pack and come right away?'

This was a terrible shock to Gwen - her father ill - her mother desperate - and she herself to leave in a hurry. Then another thought came to her and she groaned.

This would mean no school in Switzerland. In a moment her whole future loomed up before her, not bright and shining with happiness in a delightful new school, but black and full of endless, wearisome jobs for a hysterical mother, full of comfortings for a complaining woman - and with no steady, kindly father in the background.

When she thought of her father Gwen covered her eyes in shame and remorse. 'I never even said good-bye!' she cried out loudly, startling Miss Winter and Miss Grayling. 'I never - even - said - good-bye! And I didn't write when I knew he was ill. Now it's too late.'

Too late! What dreadful words. Too late to say she was sorry, too late to be loving, too late to be good and kind.

'I said cruel things, I hurt him - oh, Miss Winter, why didn't you stop me?' cried Gwen, her face white and her eyes tearless. Tears had always been so easy to Gwen - but now they wouldn't come. Miss Winter looked back at her, not daring to remind Gwen how she had pleaded with her to show a little kindness and not to force her own way so much.

'Gwen, dear - I'm very sorry about this,' said Miss Grayling's kind voice. I think you should go and pack now, because Miss Winter wants to catch the next train back. Your mother needs you and you must go. Gwen - you haven't always been all you should be. Now is your chance to show that there is something more in you than we guess.'

Gwen stumbled out of the room. Miss Winter followed to help her to pack. Miss Grayling sat and thought. Somehow punishment always caught up with people, if they had deserved it, just as happiness sooner or later caught up with people who had earned it. You sowed your own seeds and reaped the fruit you had sowed. If only every girl could learn that, thought Miss Grayling, there wouldn't be nearly so much unhappiness in the world!

Darrell came into the dormy as Gwen was packing. She was crying now, her tears almost blinding her.

'Gwen - what's the matter?' said Darrell.

'Oh, Darrell - my father's terribly ill - he's not going to live,' wept Gwen. 'Oh, Darrell, please forget all the horrible, horrible things I've said this term. If only he'd live and I had the chance to make up to him for the beast I've been, I'd do everything he wanted - take the dullest, miserablest job in the world, and give up everything else. But it's too late!'

Darrell was shocked beyond words. She put her arm round Gwen, not knowing what to say. Miss Winter spoke timidly.

'We really must catch that train, Gwen dear. Is this all you have to pack?'

'I'll pack her trunk and see it's sent on,' said Darrell, glad to be able to offer to do something. 'Just take a few things, Gwen. in your nightcase.'

She went with Gwen to the front door, miserable for her. What a dreadful way to leave Malory Towers! Poor Gwen! All her fine hopes and dreams blown away like smoke. And those awful words - too late! How dreadful Gwen must feel when she remembered her unkindness. Miss Grayling saw her off too, and shut the door quietly after the car had gone down the drive.

'Don't be too miserable about it,' she said to Darrell. 'It may be the making of Gwen. Don't let it spoil your last week or two, Darrell dear!'

Darrell gave the surprised Miss Grayling a sudden hug, and then wondered how in the world she dared to do such a thing! She went to tell the news to the others.

It cast a gloom on everyone, of course, though many thought secretly that Gwen deserved it. Gwen had no real friends and never had had. She had grumbled and groaned and wept and boasted her way through her years at Malory Towers, and left only unpleasant memories behind. But Sally, Darrell, Mary-Lou and one or two others tried to think kindly of her because of her great trouble.

Soon other things came to make the girls forget Gwen. Darrell and Sally won the school tennis match against the old girls. Moira won the singles. Someone had a birthday and her mother sent such a magnificent cake that there was enough for everyone in the school! It was delivered in a special van, and carried in by two people!

Then news came of Jo. It came through Deirdre. She received a parcel from Jo and a letter.

Here's some things for you I got myself [wrote Jo], And I've packed them myself too. I don't know what I 'm going to do yet. Dad says he won't be able to get me into a school as good as Malory Towers, I'll have to go to any that will take me. But I don 'r mind telling you I'm not going to be idiotic again. Dad's been a brick, but he's awfully cut up really. He keeps saying it's half his fault. Mother's fed up with me. She shouldn't have kept boasting I was at Malory Towers She says I've let the family

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name down. All I can say is, it's a good thing it's only 'Jones'.

I'm sorry I got you into a row, and I'm awfully glad they didn't expel you too. I wish you'd do something for me. I wish you'd tell the second-formers (go to Felicity) that I apologize for not owning up that time. Will you? That's been on my conscience for ages.

I do miss Malory Towers. Now I know I'm not going back again I see how splendid it was.

Hope you like the parcel.

Jo

Deirdre took the letter to Felicity, who read it in silence and then handed it back. 'Thanks,' she said. 'I'll tell the others. And - er - give her best wishes from the second- formers, will you? Don't forget. Just that — best wishes from the second-formers.'



News came from Gwen too news that made Darrell heave a sigh of relief. Gwen's father was not going to die. Gwen had seen him. It hadn't been too late after all. He would be an invalid for the rest of his life, and Gwen would certainly now have to take a job - but she was trying to be good about it.

It's mother who is so difficult [she wrote]. She just cries and cries. Well, I might have grown like that too, if this hadn't happened to me. I shall never be as strong-minded and courageous as you, Darrell - or Sally - or Bill and Clarissa - but I don't think I'll ever again be as weak and selfish as I was. You see - it wasn't 'too late' after all. And that has made a lot of difference to me. I feel as if I've been given another chance.

Do, do, do write to me sometimes. I think and think of you all at Malory Towers. I know none of you think of me, but you might just write occasionally.

All the best to the form and you.

Gwen

Darrell did write, of course. She wrote at once. Darrell was happy and had a happy future to look forward to, and she could well afford to spill a little happiness into Gwen's dull and humdrum life. Sally wrote too and so did Mary-Lou. Bill and Clarissa sent photographs of the stables they meant to set up as a riding school in the autumn.

And now indeed the last term was drawing to an end. Tidying up of shelves and cupboards began. Personal belongings from the sixth-form studies were sent home. Trunks were lugged down from the attics. All the familiar bustle of the last days of term began once more. Belinda drew her last 'scowl', and Irene hummed her last tune. The term was almost finished.

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'Last day, Darrell,' said Sally, when they awoke on the very last morning. 'And thank goodness it's sunny and bright. I couldn't bear to leave on a rainy day.'

'Our last day!' said Darrell. 'Do you remember the first, Sally - six years ago? We were little shrimps of twelve - smaller than Felicity and June! How the time has flown!'

The last-day bustle began in earnest after breakfast. Matron was about the only calm person in the school, with the exception of Miss Grayling, whom nobody had ever seen flustered or ruffled. Mam'zelle was as usual in a state of beaming, bewildered good temper. Miss Potts bustled about with first-formers who had lost this, that or the other.

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The trunks had most of them gone off in advance, but those being taken by car were piled up in the drive. Pop, the handyman, ran about like a hare, and carried heavy trunks on his broad shoulder as if they weighed only a pound or two. The first car arrived and hooted in the drive. An excited third-former squealed and almost fell down the stairs from top to bottom when she recognized her parents' car.

'TiensV said Mam'zelle, catching her. 'Is this the way to come down the stairs? Always you hurry too much, Hilary!'

'Come down to the pool, Sally,' said Darrell. They went down the steep path and stood beside the gleaming, restless pool, which was swept every now and again by an extra big wave coming over the rocks.

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'We've had fun here,' said Darrell. 'Now let's go to the rose-garden.'

They went there and looked at the masses of brilliant roses. Each was silently saying good-bye to the places she loved most. They went to all the common-rooms, from the first to the sixth, remembering what had happened in each. They peeped into the dining-room, and then into the different form-rooms. What fun they had had!

And what fun they were going to have! 'We'll have a good look backwards, today, then we'll set our eyes forward,' said Sally. 'College will be better fun still, Darrell - everyone says so.'

June and Felicity caught sight of the two sixth-formers wandering around. June nudged Felicity. 'Look - they're

saying a fond farewell. Don't they look solemn?'

June caught up with the sixth-formers. 'Hallo,' she said. 'You've forgotten something.'

'What?' asked Sally and Darrell.

'You've forgotten to say good-bye to the stables and the wood-shed, and . . .'

'That's not funny,' said Darrell. 'You wait till it's your last day, young June!'

'June's got no feelings at all, have you, June?' said Alicia, appearing round the corner. 'I feel a bit solemn myself today. Here, you two youngsters, this can jolly well be a solemn day for you too!'

To June's intense surprise she took her by the shoulders and looked into her eyes. 'Carry on for me,' she said. 'Carry the standard high! Do you promise, June?'

'I promise,' said June, startled. 'You - you can trust me, Alicia.'

'And I promise, Darrell,' said Felicity, equally solemnly. 'I'll never let Malory Towers down. I'll carry the standard high too.'

Alicia released June's shoulders. 'Well,' she said, 'so

long as we've got someone to hand on the standard to, I'm happy! Maybe our own daughters will help to carry on the tradition one day.'

'And have riding lessons on Bill's and Clarissa's horses,' said Felicity, which made them all laugh.

There was more hooting in the drive. 'Come on. We shan't be ready when our people arrive,' said Alicia. 'That sounds like my brother Sam hooting. He said he'd come and fetch me today.'

Into the seething crowd they went. Mam'zelle was shouting for someone who had gone long since, and Suzanne was trying to explain to her that she wasn't there. Miss Potts was carrying a pair of pyjamas that had apparently dropped out of someone's nightcase. Matron rushed after a small first-former anxiously, nobody could imagine why. It was the old familiar last- morning excitement.

'Darrell! Felicity!' suddenly called Mrs Rivers' voice. 'Here we are! Where on earth were you? We've been here for ages.'

'Oh, that was Daddy's horn we heard hooting,' said Felicity. 'I might have guessed. Come on, Darrell. Got your case?'

'Yes, and my racket,' said Darrell. 'Where's yours?'

Felicity disappeared into the crowd. Mr Rivers kissed Darrell and laughed. 'Doing her disappearing act already,' he said.

'Good-bye, Darrell! Don't forget to write!' yelled Alicia. 'See you in October at St Andrews.'

She stepped back heavily on Mam'zelle's foot. 'Oh, sorry, Mam'zelle.'

'Always you tread on my feet,' said Mam'zelle, quite unfairly. 'Have you seen Katherine? She has left her racket behind.'

Felicity ran tip with her own racket. 'Good-bye, Mam'zelle. Be careful of snakes these holidays, won't

you?'

'Ahhhhhhh! You bad girl, you,' said Mani'zelk1. T heeeess at you! Ssssssss!'

This astonished Miss Grayling considerably. She was just nearby, and got the full benefit of Mam'zelle's ferocious hiss. Mam'zelle was covered with confusion and disappeared hurriedly.

Darrell laughed. 'Oh dear - I do love this last-minute Hurry. Oh - are we off. Daddy? Good-bye, Miss Grayling, good-bye, Miss Potts, good-bye, Mam'zelle - good-bye, Malory Towers!'

And good-bye to you, Darrell - and good luck. We've loved knowing you. Good-bye!

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## HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Mollie and Peter had just arrived home for the holi-days. Their schools had broken up the same day, which was very lucky, and Mother has met them at the station.

They hugged her hard. "Mother! It's grand to see you again. How's everyone?"

"Fine," said Mother. "The garden's looking lovely, you bedrooms are all ready for you, and your playroom at the botton of the garden is long-ing for you to go there and play as usual."

The two children looked at one another. They had a big Secret. One they couldn't possibly men-tion even in their letters to one another at school. How they were longing to talk about it now!

"Can we just pop down to our playroom first of all?" asked Peter when they got home.

"Oh, no, dear!" said Mother. "You must come upstairs and wash—and help me to unpack your things. You will have plenty of time to spend in your playroom these holidays."

The children's Secret was in their playroom— and they so badly wanted to see it again. They went upstairs and washed and then went down to tea.

"Can we go to our playroom after we've helped you to unpack?" asked Peter.

Mother laughed. "Very well leave me to un-pack, and go along. I expect you want to see if I've given away any of your things. Well, I haven't.

I never do that without asking you."

After tea Peter spoke to Mollie in a low voice.

"Mollie! Do you think Chinky will be down in our playroom waiting for us—with the Wishing- Chair?"

"I do hope so," said Mollie. "Oh, Peter, it was dreadful trying to keep our Secret all the time long and never saying anything to anyone."

"Well, it's such a marvellous Secret it's worth keeping well, said Peter. "Do you remember when we first got the Wishing- Chair, Mollie?"

"Yes," said Mollie. "We went to a funny little shop that sold old, old things to get something for Mother's birthday, and we saw heaps of queer en-~~chanted~~ things there. And we were frightened and huddled together in an old chair..."

"And we wished we were safe back at home," said Peter, "and, hey presto! the chair grew little red wings on its legs, and flew out of the window with us, and took us back to our playroom!"

"Yes. And it wouldn't go back to the shop even when we commanded it to," said Mollie. "So we had to keep it—our very own Wishing-Chair."

"And do you remember how we went off in it again, and came to a castle where there was a gi-~~ant~~ who kept a little servant called Chinky?" said Peter. "And we rescued him and took him home in the Wishing-Chair with us."

"That was lovely," said Mollie. "And after that Chinky lived down in our playroom and looked after the chair for us..."

"And told us when it grew its wings so that we could all fly off in it again and have wonderful adventures," said Peter. "Then we had to go to school and leave it"

"But it didn't matter really, because Chinky took the chair home to his mother's cottage and lived with her and took care of it for us," said Mollie.

"And he said he'd come back as soon as we came home for the holidays, and bring the chair with him so that we could go adventuring again," finished Peter. "If Mother only knew that's the reason we want to get down to the playroom—to see if Chinky is there, and to see the dear old Wishing-Chair again."

Peter found the key. "Come on, Mollie—Let's go and see all our toys again."

"And the Wishing-Chair," said Mollie in a whisper. "And Chinky."

They rushed downstairs and out into the garden. It was the end of July and the garden was full of flowers; it was lovely to be home! No more lessons for eight weeks, no more preps.

They raced down to the playroom, which was really a big airy shed at the bottom of the garden. Peter slid the key into the lock. "Chinky!" he called. "Are you here?"

He unlocked the door. The children went into the playroom and looked round. It was a nice room, with a big rug on the floor, shelves for their books and toys, a cot with Mollie's old dolls in it, and a large dolls' house in the corner.

But there was no Wishing-Chair and no Chinky

the pixie! The children stared round in dismay.

"He's not here," said Peter. "He said he would come to-day with the chair. I gave him the date and he wrote it down in his note-book."

"I hope he's not ill," said Mollie. They looked all round the playroom, set the musical box going and opened the windows.

They felt disappointed. They had so looked forward to seeing Chinky, and to sitting once more in the Wishing-Chair. Suddenly a little face looked in at the door.

Mollie gave a shout. "Chinky! It's you! we were so worried about you! We hoped you'd be here."

Both children gave the little pixie a hug. Chinky grinned. "Well, how could I be here waiting for you if the door was locked and the windows fastened, silly? I may be a pixie, but I can't fly through locked doors. I have missed you. Were you very bored away at school?"

"Oh, no" said Peter. "Boarding school is simply lovely. We both loved it—but we're jolly glad to be home again."

"Chinky, where's the Wishing-Chair?" asked Mollie anxiously. "Nothing's happened to it, has it? Have you got it with you?"

"Well, I brought it here this morning," said Chinky, "but when I found the door of the play-room was locked and couldn't get in I hid it under the hedge at the bottom of the garden. But you'd be surprised how many people nearly found it!"

"But nobody goes to the bottom of the garden!" said Peter.

"Oh, don't they!" said Chinky. "Well, first of all your gardener thought he'd cut the hedge there to-day, and I had an awful job dragging the chair from one hiding place to another. Then an old gipsy woman came by, and she almost saw it, but I barked like a dog and she ran away."

The children laughed. "Poor old Chinky! You must have been glad when we got here at last."

"Let's go and get it," said Peter. "I'm hoping to sit in it again. Has it grown its wings much since we left it with you, Chinky?"

"Not once," said Chinky. "Funny, isn't it?"

It's just stood in my mother's kitchen like any ordinary chair, and never grown even one red wing!

I think it was waiting for you to come back."

"I hope it was—because then it may grow its wings heaps of times," said Peter, "and we'll go off on lots of adventures."

They went to the hedge. "There it is!" said Mollie in excitement. "I can see one of its legs sticking out."

They dragged out the old chair. "Just the same!" said Peter in delight. "And how well you've kept it Chinky. It's polished so brightly."

"Ah, that was my mother did that," said Chinky. "she said such a wonderful chair should have a wonderful polish, and she was at it every day, rub, rub, rub, till the chair groaned!"

Peter carried the chair back to the playroom. Chinky went in front to make sure there was no-body looking. They didn't want any questions asked about why chairs should be

hidden in hedges. They set it down in its old place in the playroom. Then they all climbed into it.

"It's just the same," said Peter. "We feel a bit more squashed than usual because Mollie and I seem to have grown at school. But you haven't grown, Chinky."

"No. I shan't grow any more," said Chinky. "Don't you wish the chair would grow its wings and go flapping off somewhere with us now?"

"Oh, yes" said Mollie. "Chair, do grow your wings—just to please us! Even if it's only to take us a little way up into the air and back."

But the chair didn't. The children looked anxiously down at its legs to see if the red buds were forming that sprouted into wings, but there was nothing there.

"It's no good," said Chinky. "It won't grow its wings just because it's asked. It can be very obstinate, you know. All I hope is that it hasn't forgotten how to grow wings after being still so long. I shouldn't like the magic to fade away."

This was a dreadful thought. The children patted the arms of the chair. "Dear Wishing-Chair! You haven't forgotten how to grow wings, have you?"

The chair gave a remarkable creak, a very long one. Everyone laughed. "It's all right!" said Chinky. "that's its way of telling us it hasn't forgotten. A creak is the only voice it's got!"

Mother came down the garden. "Children! Daddy's home. He wants to see you!"

"Right!" called back Peter. He turned to Chinky. "See you tomorrow, Chinky. You can cuddle up on the old sofa as usual, with the rug and the cushion, for the night. You'll live in our playroom, won't you, as you did before, and tell us when the chair grows its wings?"

"Yes. I shall like to live here once more," said Chinky.

The Children ran back to the house. They had a very nice evening indeed telling their parents everything that had happened in the term. Then off they went to bed, glad to be in their own dear little rooms again.

But they hadn't been asleep very long before Peter began to dream that he was a rat being shaken by a dog. It was a very unpleasant dream, and he woke up with a jump.

It was Chinky shaking him by the arm. "Wake up!" whispered the pixie. "The chair's grown its wings already. They're big, strong ones, and they're flapping like anything. If you want an adventure hurry up!"

Well! What a thrill! Peter woke Mollie and they pulled on their clothes very quickly and ran down the garden. They heard a loud flapping noise as they reached the playroom shed. "It's the chair's wings," panted Chinky. "Come on—we'll just sit in it before it goes flying off!"

II

## OFF ON AN ADVENTURE

The children raced in at the playroom door and made for the Wishing-Chair. They could see it easily in the bright moonlight. It was just about to fly when they flung themselves in it. Chinky squeezed between them, sitting on the top of the back of the chair.

"Good old Wishing-Chair!" said Peter. "You didn't take long to grow your wings! Where are we going?"

"Where would you like to go? said Chinky.

"Wish, and we'll go wherever you wish."

"Well—let me see—oh dear, I simply can't think

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of anywhere," said Mollie. "Peter, you wish- quickly."

"Er—Wishing-Chair, take us to—to—oh, good-ness knows where I want it to go!" cried Peter. "I simply don't..."

But dear me, the Wishing-Chair was off! It flapped its wings very strongly indeed, rose up into the air, flew towards the door and out of it—then up into the air it went, flapping its red wings in the moonlight.

Chinky giggled. "Oh, Peter—you said 'Take us to Goodness Knows Where'," said the pixie. "And that's just about where we're going!"

"Gracious!—is there really a land called Good-ness Knows Where?" said Peter, in surprise.

"Yes. Don't you remember when we went to the Land of Scallywags once, the Prince of Good-ness Knows Where came to see me," said Chinky. "I was pretending to be a King. Well, I suppose it's his Land we're going to."

"Where is it?" said Mollie.

"Goodness knows!" said Chinky. "I don't. I've never met anyone who did, either."



"The Wishing-Chair seems to know," said Peter, as it flew higher and higher in the air.

But it didn't know, really. It dropped downwards after a time and came to a tiny village. Peter leaned out of the chair and gazed with great interest at it. "Look at that bridge," he said. "Hey, Chair, whatever are you doing now?"

The chair hadn't landed in the village. It had flown a few feet above the queer little houses and had then shot upwards again.

The chair flew on again, and then came to a heaving mass of water. Was it the sea? Or a lake? The children didn't know. "Look at that lovely silver moon-path on the sea," said Mollie, leaning out of the chair. "I'm sure it leads to the moon!"

The chair seemed to think so, too. It flew down to the water, got on the moon-path and followed it steadily, up and up and up.

"Hey! This isn't the way to Goodness Knows Where!" said Chinky, in alarm. "It's the way to the moon. Don't be silly, Chair!"

The chair stopped and hovered in mid-air as if it had heard Chinky and was changing its mind. To the children's great relief it left the moon-path and flew on till it came to a little island. This was perfectly round and flat, and had one big tree standing up in the middle of it. Under the tree was a boat and someone was fast asleep in it.

"Oh, that's my cousin, Sleep-Alone," said Chinky, in surprise. "He's a funny fellow, you know—can't bear to sleep if anyone else is within miles of him. So he has a boat and an aeroplane, and each night he takes one or the other and

goes off to some lonely place to sleep. Hey there, Sleep-Alone!"

Chinky's shout made the children jump. The chair jumped, too, and Mollie was almost jerked off. She clutched at the arm.

The little man in the boat awoke. He was more like a brownie than a pixie and had a very long beard, which he had wound neatly round his neck

like a scarf. He was most surprised to see the Wish-ing-Chair landing on the island just near him. He scowled at Chinky.

"What's all this? Coming and shouting at me in the middle of the night! Can't I ever sleep alone?"

"You always do!" said Chinky. "Don't be so cross. Aren't you surprised to see us?"

"Not a bit," said Sleep-Alone. "You're always turning up when I don't want to have company. Go away. I've a cold coming on and I feel gloomy."

"Is that why you've got your beard wound round your neck—to keep it warm?" asked Mollie. "How long is it when it unwinds?"

"I've no idea," said Sleep-Alone, who seemed a disagreeable fellow. "Where are you going in the middle of the night? Are you quite mad?"

"We're going to Goodness Knows Where," said Chinky. "But the chair doesn't seem to know the way. Do you know it?"

"Goodness knows where it is," said Sleep- Alone, pulling his beard tighter round his neck. "Better ask her."

The children and Chinky stared. "Ask who?" said Chinky.

"Goodness, of course," said Sleep-Alone, settling down in his boat again.

"Oh—is Goodness the name of a person then?" said Mollie, suddenly seeing light.

"You are a very stupid little girl, I think," said Sleep-Alone. "Am I to go on and on saying the same thing over and over again? Now good night,

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and go and find Goodness if you want to disturb someone else."

"Where does she live?" bellowed Chinky in Sleep-Alone's ear, afraid that he would go to sleep before he told them anything else.

That was too much for Sleep-Alone. He shot up and reached for an oar. Before Chinky could get out of the way he had given him such a slap with the oar blade that Chinky yelled at the top of his voice. Then Sleep-Alone turned on the two children, waving the oar in a most alarming manner.

Peter pulled Mollie to the chair. He put out a hand and dragged Chinky to it too, shouting, "Go to Goodness, Chair, go to Goodness, wherever she is!" Up rose the chair so very suddenly that Chinky fell off and had to be dragged up again.

Sleep-Alone roared after them. "Now I'm throughly awake and I shan't go to sleep to-night. You wait until I see you again, Chinky, I'll fly you off in my aeroplane to the Land of Rubbish and drop you in the biggest dustbin there!"

"He's not a very nice cousin to have, is he?" said Mollie, when they had left Sleep-Alone well behind. "I hope we don't see him again."

"Who is this Goodness, I wonder?" said Peter.

"Never heard of her," said Chinky. "But the chair really seems to know where it's going this time, so I suppose it knows Goodness all right!"

The Wishing-Chair was flying steadily to the east now. It had left the water behind and was now over some land that lay shining in the moonlight.

The children could see towers and Pinnacles, but they were too high up to see anything clearly.

The chair suddenly flew downwards. It came to a small cottage. All three of its chimneys were smoking. The smoke was green, and the children knew that was a sign that a witch lived there.

"I say—that's witch-smoke," said Peter, nervously. He had met witches before on his adventures, and he knew quite a bit about them.

"I hope the chair has come to the right place," said Mollie, as it landed gently on the path just outside the door of the little cottage.

They jumped off the chair, dragged it under a tree and went to knock at the door. A little old woman opened it. She

looked so ordinary that the children felt sure she wasn't a witch.

"Please, is this where Goodness lives?" asked Chinky, politely.

"Not exactly. But I keep a Book of Goodness," said the old woman. "Have you come to seek advice from it?"

"Well—we rather wanted to know where the Land of Goodness Knows Where is," said Chinky. "And we were told that only Goodness knew where it was!"

"Ah, well—you will have to consult my Goodness Book then," said the old woman. "Wait till I get on my things."

She left them in a tiny kitchen and disappeared. When she came back, what a difference in her! She had on a tall, pointed hat, the kind witches and wizards wear and a great cloak that kept blowing out round her as if she kept a wind under its folds. She no longer looked an ordinary little old woman—she was a proper witch, but her eyes were kind and smiling.

She took down from a shelf a very big book indeed. It seemed to be full of names and very tiny writing. "What to be full of names and very tiny writing. "What are your names?" she asked. "I must look you up in my Goodness Book before you can be told what you want to know."

They told her, and she ran her finger down column after column. "Ah—Peter—helped a boy with his homework for a whole week last term—remembered his mother's birthday—owned up when he did something wrong—my word, there's a whole list of goodness here. And Mollie, too—gave up her half-holiday to stay in with a friend who was ill—told

the truth when she knew she would get into trouble for doing so—quite a long list of good-ness for her, too."

"Now me," said Chinky. "I've been living with my mother. I do try to be good to her." The old woman ran her finger down the list again and nodded her head. "Yes—did his mother's shopping and never grumbled—took her breakfast in bed each day—never forgot to feed the dog—yes, you're all right, Chinky."

"What happens next?" said Peter. The witch took her Book of Goodness to a curious hole in the middle of the kitchen floor. It suddenly glowed as if it were full of shining water. The witch held the book over it, and out of it slid little gleaming streaks of colour. "That's your Goodness going into the magic pool," she said. "Now, ask what you want to know."

Chinky asked, in rather a trembling voice, "We want to know where the Land of Goodness Knows Where is."

And dear me, a very extraordinary thing happened! On the top of the shining water appeared a shimmering map. In the middle of it was marked "Land of Goodness Knows Where." The children and Chinky leaned over it eagerly, trying to see how to get there.

"Look—we fly due east to the rising sun," began Chinky; then he stopped. They had all heard a very peculiar noise outside. A loud creaking noise

"The chair's calling to us!" cried Chinky and he rushed to the door. "Oh, look—it's flying away—and somebody else is in it.

Somebody's stolen the Wishing-Chair! What-ever shall we do?"

## WHERE CAN THE WISHING-CHAIR BE?

"Who's taken our chair?" cried Peter, in despair. "We can't get back home now. Come back, Chair!"

But the chair was under somebody else's commands now, and it took no notice. It rose higher and higher and was soon no more than a speck in the moonlight. The three stared at one another, very upset indeed.

"Our very first adventure—and the chair's gone," said Mollie, in a shaky voice. "It's too bad. Right at the very beginning of the holidays, too."

"Who was that taking our chair—do you know?" Chinky asked the witch, who was busy smoothing the surface of the water in the hole in the floor with that looked like a fine brush. The map that had shone there was now gone, and the water was empty of reflection or picture. The children wondered what would appear there next.

The witch shook her head. "No—I don't know," she said. "I didn't hear anyone out there because I was so busy in here with you. All kinds of people come to ask me questions, you know, just as you did, and watch to see what appears in my magic pool. Some of the people are very queer. I expect it was one of them—and he saw your chair, knew what it was and flew off in it at once. It would be very valuable to him."

"I do think it's bad luck," said Mollie, tears coming into her eyes. "Our very first night. And how are we to get back home again?"

"You can catch the Dawn Bus if you like," said the witch. "It will be along here in a few minutes' time. As soon as the sky turns silver in the east it comes rumbling along. Now, listen, I can hear the bus."

Wondering whatever kind of people caught the Dawn Bus, Millie and the others went out to catch it. It came rumbling along, looking more like a toy bus than a real one. It was crammed with little folk of all kinds! Brownies with long beards leaned against one another, fast asleep. Two tiny fairies slept with their arms round each other. A wizard nodded off to sleep, his pointed hat getting more and more crooked each moment—and three gob-lins yawned so widely that their mischievous little faces seemed all mouth!

"The bus is full," said Mollie, in dismay.

"Sit in front with the driver, then," said the witch. "Go on, or you'll miss it!"

So Mollie, Peter and Chinky squashed themselves in front with the driver. He was a brownie, and wore his beard tied round his waist and made into a bow behind. It looked very odd.

"Plenty of room," he said, and moved up so far that he couldn't reach the wheel to drive the bus. "You drive it," he said to Chinky and, very pleased indeed, Chinky took the wheel.

But, goodness gracious me, Chinky was no good at all at driving buses! He nearly hit a tree, swerved violently and went into an enormous puddle that splashed everyone from head to foot, and then went into a ditch and out of it at top speed.

By this time all the passengers were wide awake and shouting in alarm. "Stop him! He's mad! Fetch a policeman!"

The bus-driver was upset to hear all the shouting. He moved back to his wheel so quickly that Chinky was flung out into the road. He got up and ran after the bus, shouting.



But the bus-driver wouldn't stop. He drove on at top speed, though Mollie and Peter begged him to go back for Chinky.

"I don't know how to back this bus," said the brownie driver, solemnly. "I keep meaning to learn but I never seem to have time. Most annoying. Still, I hardly ever want to back."

"Well, stop if you don't know how to back," cried Peter, but the brownie looked really horrified.

"What—stop before I come to a stopping-place? You must be mad. No, no—full speed ahead is my motto. I've got to get all these tired passengers back home as soon as possible."

"Why are they so tired?" said Mollie, seeing the wizard beginning to nod again.

"Well, they've all been to a moonlight dance," said the driver. "Very nice dance, too. I went to it. Last time I went to one I was so tired when I drove my bus home that I fell asleep when I was driving it. Found myself in the Land of Dreamland in no time, and used up every drop of my petrol." This all sounded rather extraordinary. Mollie and Peter looked at him nervously, hoping that he wouldn't fall asleep this time. Mollie could hardly keep her eyes open. She worried about Chinky. Would he find his way back to the play-room all right? And, oh dear, what were they going to do about the Wishing-Chair?

Just as she was thinking that she fell sound asleep. Peter was already asleep. The driver looked at them, gave a grunt, and fell asleep himself.

So, of course, the bus went straight on to Dreamland again, and when Peter and Mollie awoke, they were not in the bus at all but in their own beds! Mollie tried to remember all that

had happened. Was it real or was it a dream? She thought she had better go and ask Peter.

She went to his room. He was sitting up in bed and rubbing his eyes. "I know what you've come to ask me," he said. "The same question I was coming to ask you. Did we dream it or didn't we? And how did we get back here?"

"That bus must have gone to the Land of Dreamland again," said Mollie. "But how we got here I don't know. I'm still in my day-clothes— look!"

"So am I," said Peter, astonished. "Well, that shows it was real then. Oh, dear—do you suppose Chinky is back yet?"

"Shall we go and see now?" said Mollie.

But the breakfast bell rang just then. They cleaned their teeth, did their hair, washed and tidied their crumpled clothes—then down they went.

After breakfast they ran down the playroom at the bottom of the garden.

Chinky was there! He was lying on the sofa fast asleep.

He didn't stir. Mollie shook him.

"Don't wake me, Nother," murmured Chinky, trying to turn over. "Let me sleep."

"Chinky—you're not at home you're here," said Peter, shaking him again.

Chinky rolled over on his other side—and fell right off the sofa!

That woke him up with a jerk. He gave a shout of alarm, opened his eyes and sat up.

LT say, did you tip me off tksofa?" he said. "You needn't have done that."

"We didn't. You rolled off yoieif," said Mollie with a laugh. "How did you gel lack last night, Chinky?"

"I walked all the way—so nosmder I'm tired this morning," said Chinky, hise;;s beginning to close again. "I did think you mil have stopped the bus and picked meup."

"The driver wouldn't stop,' splained Peter. "He was awfully silly.really. Wise re very upset at leaving you behind"

"The thing is, Chinky—hove we going to find out where the Wishing-Chaitlas gone?" said Peter, seriously. "It's only the beginning of the holi-days, you know, and if we don't jet it back the holidays will be very dull indeei

"I'm too sleepy to think," saiithinky, and fell asleep again. Mollie shook himmpatiently.

"Chinky, do wake up. We really are very wor-ried about the Wishing-Chair."

But there was no waking Chinky this time! He was so sound asleep that he didn't even stir when Mollie tickled him under the arms.

The two children were disappointed. They stayed in the playroom till dinner-time, but Chinky didn't wake up. They went indoors to have their dinner and then came down to see if Chinky was awake yet. He wasn't!

Just then there came a soft tapping at the door and a little voice said: "Chinky! Are you there?"

Peter opened the door. Outside stood a small elf, looking rather alarmed . He held a leaflet in his hand.

"Oh, I'm very sorry," he said. "I didn't know you were here. I wanted Chinky."

"He's so fast asleep we can't wake him," said Peter. "Can we give him a message?"

"Yes. Tell him I saw this notice of his," said the little elf, and showed it to the children. It was a little card, printed in Chinky's writing :

"Lost or stolen. Genuine Wishing-Chair.

Please give any information about it to

CHINKY.

(I shall be in the playroom.)"

"Anything else?" asked Peter.

"Well—you might tell him I think I know where the chair is," said the little elf, shyly.

"Do you?" cried both children. "Well, tell us, then—it's our chair!"

"There's to be a sale of furniture at a brownie's shop not far away," said the elf, "and there are six old chairs to be sold. Now, I know he only had five—so where did the sixth come from? Look, here's a picture of them."

The children looked at the picture. Peter gave a cry. "Why, they're exactly like our chair. Are they all wishing-chairs, then?"

"Oh, no. Your chair is very unusual. I expect what happened is that the thief who flew off on your chair wondered how to hide it. He remembered somebody who had five chairs just like it and offered it to him to make the set complete."

"I don't see why he should do that," said Mollie, puzzled.

"Wait," said the elf. "Nobody would suspect that one of the six chairs was a wishing-chair—and I've no doubt that the thief will send someone to bid a price for all six; and when he gets them he will suddenly say that he has discovered one of them is a wishing-chair, and sell it to a wizard for a sack of gold!"

"I think that's a horrid trick," said Mollie, in disgust. "Well, it looks as if we'll have to go along to this furniture shop and have a look at the chairs, to see if we can find out which one is ours. Oh, dear, I do wish Chinky would wake up."

"You'd better go as soon as you can," said the elf. "The thief won't lose much time in buying it

back, with the other chairs thrown in!"

So they tried to wake Chinky again—but he just wouldn't wake up! "We'll have to go by ourselves," said Peter at last. "Elf, will you show us the way? You will? Right, then off we go! Leave your message on the table for Chinky to see, then he'll guess where we've gone!"

#### IV

#### HUNTING FOR THE CHAIR!

The elf took them a very surprising way. He guided them to the bottom of the garden and through a gap in the hedge.

Then he took them to the end of the field and showed them a dark ring of grass.

"We call that a fairy ring," said Mollie. "Some-times it has little toadstools all the way round it."

"Yes," said the elf. "Well, I'll show you a use for fairy rings. Sit down on the dark grass, please."

Mollie and Peter sat down. They had to squeeze very close together indeed, because the ring of grass was not large. The elf felt about in it as if he was looking for something. He found it—and pressed hard!

And down shot the ring of grass if it were a lift! The children, taken by surprise, gasped and held on to one another. They stopped with such a bump that they were shaken off the circle of grass and

rolled away from it, over and over.

"So sorry," said the elf. "I'm afraid I pressed the button rather hard! Are you hurt?"

"No—not really," said Mollie. As she spoke she saw the circle of grass shoot up again and fit itself neatly back into the field.

"Well—we do learn surprising things," she said. "What next, elf?"

"Along this passage," said the elf, and trotted in front of them. It was quite light underground, though neither of the children could see where the lighting came from. They passed little, brightly- painted doors on their way, and Peter longed to rat-rat at the knockers and see who answered.

They came to some steps and went up them, round and round in a spiral stairway. Wherever were they coming to? At the top was a door. The elf opened it—and there they were, in a small round room, very cosy indeed.

"What a queer, round room," said Peter, surprised. "Oh—I know why it's round. It's inside the trunk of a tree! I've been in a tree-house before!"

"Guessed right first time!" said the elf. "This is where I live. I'd ask you to stop and have a cup of tea with me, but I think we'd better get on and see those chairs before anything happens to them."

"Yes. So do I," said Peter. "Where's the door out of the tree?"

It was fitted in so cunningly that it was impossible to see it unless you knew where it was. The elf went to it at once, of course, and opened it. They all stepped out into a wood. The elf shut the door. The children looked back at it. No—they couldn't possibly, possibly tell where it was now—it was so much part of the tree!

"Come along," said the elf and they followed him through the wood. They came to a lane and then to a very neat village, all the houses set in tiny rows, with a little square green in the middle, and four white ducks looking very clean on a round pond in the centre of the green.

"How very proper!" said Peter. "Not a blade of grass out of place."

"This is Pin Village," said the elf. "You've heard

the saying, 'As neat as a pin,' I suppose? Well, this is Pin—always very neat and tidy and the people of the village, the Pins, never have a button missing or a hair blowing loose."

The children saw that it was just as the elf said— the people were so tidy and neat that the children felt dirty and untidy at once. "They all look a bit like pins dressed up and walking about," said Mollie with a giggle. "Well, I'm glad I know what 'neat as a pin' really means. Do they ever run, or make a noise, or laugh?"

"Sh! Don't laugh at them," said the elf. "Now look—do you see that shop at the corner? It isn't kept by a Pin; it's kept by Mr. Polish. He sells fur-niture."

"And he's called Polish because he's always polishing it, I suppose," said Mollie with a laugh.

"Don't be too clever!" said the elf. "He doesn't do any polishing at all—his daughter Polly does that."

"Here's the shop," said Mollie, and they stood and looked at it. She nudged Peter, "Look," she whispered, "six chairs—all exactly alike. How are we to tell which is ours?"

"Come and have a look," said Peter, and they went inside with the elf. A brownie girl was busy polishing away at the chairs, making them shine and gleam.

"There's Polly Polish," said Mollie to Peter. She must have heard what they said and looked up. She smiled. She was a nice little thing, with pointed ears like Chinky, and very green eyes.

"Hallo," she said.

Mollie smiled back. "These are nice chairs, aren't they?" she said. "You've got a whole set of them!"

"Yes—my father, Mr. Polish, was very pleased," said Polly. "He's only had five a long time, and people want to buy



chairs in sixes, you know."

"How did he manage to get the sixth one?" asked Peter.

"It was a great bit of luck," said Polly. "There's a goblin called Tricky who came along and said he wanted to sell an old chair that had once belonged to his grandmother - and when he showed it to us, lo and behold, it was the missing sixth chair of our set! So we bought it from him, and there it is. I expect now we shall be able to sell the whole set. Someone is sure to come along and buy it."

"Which chair did the goblin bring you?" asked Peter, looking hard at them all.

"I don't know now," said Polly, putting more polish on her duster and rubbing very hard at a chair. "I've been cleaning them and moving them about, you know—and they're all mixed up."

The children stared at them in despair. They all looked exactly alike to them! Oh, dear—how could they possibly tell which was their chair?

Then Polly said something very helpful, though she didn't know it! "You know," she said, "there's something queer about one of these chairs. I've polished and polished the back of it, but it seems to have a little hole there, or something. Anyway,

I can't make that little bit come bright and shining."

The children pricked up their ears at once. "Which chair?" said Peter. Polly showed them the one. It certainly seemed as if it had a hole in the back of it. Peter put his finger there—but the hole wasn't a hole! He could feel quite solid wood there!

And then he knew it was their own chair. He whispered to Mollie.

"Do you remember last year, when somebody made our Wishing-Chair invisible? And we had to get some paint to make it visible again?"

"Oh, yes!" whispered back Mollie. "I do remember—and we hadn't enough paint to make one little bit at the back of the chair become visible again, so it always looked as if there was a hole there, though there wasn't really!"

"Yes—and that's the place that poor Polly has been polishing and polishing," said Peter. "Well— now we know that this is our chair all right! If only it would grow its wings we could sit on it straight away and wish ourselves home again!" He ran his fingers down the legs of the chair to see if by any chance there were some bumps growing, that would mean wings were coming once more. But there weren't.

"Perhaps the wings will grow again this evening," said Mollie. "Let's go and have tea with the elf in his tree-house and then come back here again and see if the chair has grown its wings."

The elf was very pleased to think they would come back to tea with him. Before they went Peter looked hard at the chairs. "You know," he said to Mollie, "I think we'd better just tie a ribbon round our own chair, so that if by any chance we decided to take it and go home with it quickly before any-one could stop us, we'd know immediately which it was."

"That's a good idea," said Mollie. She had no hair-ribbon, so she took her little blue handkerchief and knotted it round the right arm of the chair.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Polly Polish in surprise.

"We'll tell you some other time, Polly," said Mollie. "Don't untie it, will you? It's to remind us of something. We'll come back again after tea."

They went off with the elf. He asked them to see if they could find his door-handle and turn it to get into his tree-house—but, however much they looked and felt about, neither of them could make out where the closely-fitting door was. "It's no wonder nobody ever knows which the tree-houses are!

The elf had to open the door for them himself, and in they went. He got them a lovely tea, with pink jellies that shone like a sunset, and blancmange that he had made in the shape of a little castle.

"I do wonder if Chinky's woken up yet," said Mollie, at last. "No, thank you, elf, I can't possibly eat any more. It was really lovely tea."

Now what about going back to the shop and seeing if we can't take our chair away?" said Peter. "We'll send Chinky to explain about it later—the thing is, we really must take it quickly, or that goblin called Tricky will send someone to buy all the set—and our chair with it!"

So off they went to the shop—and will you believe it, there were no chairs there! They were all gone from the window! The children stared in dismay.

They went into the shop. "What's happened to the chairs?" they asked Polly.

"Oh, we had such a bit of luck just after you had gone," said Polly. "Somebody came by, noticed the chairs, said that the

goblin Tricky had advised him to buy them—and paid us for them straight away!"

"Who was he?" asked Peter, his heart sinking.

"Let me see—his name was Mr. Spells," said Polly, looking in a book. "And his address is Wizard Cottage. He seemed very nice indeed."

"Oh dear," said Peter, leading Mollie out of the shop. "Now we've really lost our dear old chair."

"Don't give up!" said Mollie. "We'll go back to Chinky and tell him the whole story—and may be he will know something about this Mr. Spells and be able to get our chair back for us. Chinky's very clever."

"Yes—but before we can get it back from Mr. Spells, that wretched goblin Tricky will be after it again," said Peter. "He's sure to go and take it from Mr. Spells."

The elf took them home again. They went into the playroom. Chinky wasn't there! There was a note on the table.

It said: "Fancy you going off without me! I've gone to look for you—Chinky."

"Bother!" said Mollie. "How annoying! Here we've come back to look for him and he's gone to look for us. Now we'll have to wait till to-mor-row!"

V

## OFF TO MR. SPELLS OF WIZARD COTTAGE

Mollie and Peter certainly could do no more that day, because their mother was already wondering why they

hadn't been in to tea. They heard her calling as they read Chinky's note saying he had gone to look for them.

It's a pity Chinky didn't wait for us," said Peter. "We could have sent him to Mr. Spells to keep guard on the chair. Come on, Mollie—we'll have to go in. We've hardly seen Mother all day!"

Their mother didn't know anything about the Wishing-Chair at all, of course, because the children kept it a strict secret.

"If we tell anyone, the grown-ups will come and take our precious chair and put it in a museum or something," said Peter. "I couldn't bear to think of the Wishing-Chair growing its wings in a museum and not being able to get out of a glass case."

So they hadn't said a word to anyone. Now they ran indoors, and offered to help their mother shell peas. They sat and wondered where Chinky was. They felt very sleepy, and Mollie suddenly gave an enormous yawn.

"You look very tired, Mollie," said Mother, looking at her pale face. "Didn't you sleep well last night?"

"Well—I didn't sleep a lot," said Mollie truthfully, remembering her long flight in the Wishing-Chair and the strange bus ride afterwards.

"I think you had both better get off early to bed," said Mother. "I'll bring your suppers up to you in bed for a treat—raspberries and cream, and bread and butter—would you like that?"

In the ordinary way the children would have said no thank you to any idea of going to bed early—but they really were

so sleepy that they both yawned together and said yes, that sounded nice, thank you, Mother!

So upstairs they went and fell asleep immediately after the raspberries and cream. Mother was really very surprised when she peeped in to see them.

"Poor children—I expect all the excitement of coming home from school has tired them out," she said. "I'll make them up sandwiches to-morrow and send them out on a picnic."

They woke up early the next morning and their first thought was about the Wishing-Chair.

"Let's go down and see Chinky," said Mollie. "We've got time before breakfast."

So they dressed quickly and ran down to their playroom. But no Chinky was there—and no note either. He hadn't been back, then. Wherever could he be?

"Oh dear, first the Wishing-Chair goes, and now Chinky," said Mollie. "What's happened to him? I think we'd better go and ask that elf if he's seen him, Peter."

"We shan't have time before breakfast," said Peter. "We'll come down as soon as we've done any jobs Mother wants us to do."

They were both delighted when Mother suggested that they should take their lunch with them and go out for a day's picnicking. Why—that would be just right! They could go and hunt out the elf—and find Chinky—and perhaps go to Mr. Spells with him. Splendid!

So they eagerly took the packets of sandwiches, cake and chocolate that Mother made up for them, and Peter put them

into a little satchel to carry. Off they went. They peeped into their playroom just to make sure that Chinky still hadn't come back.

No, he hadn't. "Better leave a note for him, then," said Peter.

"What have you said?" asked Mollie, glancing over her shoulder.

"I've said: 'Why didn't you wait for us, silly? Now we've got to go and look for you whilst you're still looking for us!'"

Mollie laughed. "Oh dear this really is get-ting ridiculous. Come on—let's go to the tree- house and see if the elf is in."

So off they went, down the garden, through the hedge, and across the field to where the dark patch of grass was—the "fairy-ring." They sat down in the middle of it and Mollie felt about for the but-ton to press. She found something that felt like a little knob of earth and pressed it. Yes—it was the right button!

Down they went, not nearly as fast as the day before, because Mollie didn't press the button so hard. Then along the passage past the queer bright little doors, and up the spiral stairway. They knocked on the door.

"It's us—Mollie and Peter. Can we come in?"

The door flew open and there stood the elf. He looked very pleased. "Well, this is really friendly of you. Come in."

"We've come to ask you something," said Mollie. "Have you seen Chinky?"

"Oh, yes—he came to me yesterday, after I'd said good-bye to you, and I told him all you'd told me—and off he went to

find Polly Polish and get the latest news," said the elf.

"Well, he hasn't come back yet," said Mollie. "Where do you suppose he is?"

"Gone to see his mother, perhaps?" suggested the elf. "I really don't know. It's not much good looking for him, really, you know—he might be anywhere."

"Yes—that's true," said Peter. "Well, what shall we do, Mollie? Try and find Mr. Spells of Wizard Cottage by ourselves?"

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"Oh, I know where he lives," said the elf. "He's quite a nice fellow. I'll tell you the way. You want to take the bus through the Tall Hill, and then take the boat to the Mill. Not far off on the top of a hill you'll see a large cottage in the shape of a castle— only you can't call it a castle because it's not big enough. Mr Spells lives there."

"Oh, thank you," said Peter, and off they went to catch the bus. It was one like they had caught the other night, but it had a different driver, and was not nearly so crowded. In fact there would have been plenty of room inside for Peter and Mollie if they hadn't noticed that one of the passengers happened to be Mr. Sleep-Alone, Chinky's strange and bad—tempered cousin.

"We'd better travel with the driver on the out—side seat again," said Peter. "Sleep-Alone might recognize us and lose his temper again."

The bus travelled fast down the lane, going round corners in a hair-raising style. "Do you like going round corners on two



wheels?" asked Peter, clutching at Mollie to prevent her from falling off.

"Well, it saves wear and tear on the other," said the driver.

The bus suddenly ran straight at a very steep hill and disappeared into a black hole, which proved to be a long and bumpy tunnel. It came out again and stopped dead beside a little blue river, its front wheels almost touching the water.

"I always do that to give the passengers a fright," said the driver. "Must give them something for their money's worth!"

The children were really very glad to get out.

They looked for a boat and saw plenty cruising about on the water, all by themselves. "Look at that!" said Peter. "They must go by magic or some-thing."

One little yellow boat sailed over to them and rocked gently beside them. They got into it. The boat didn't move.

"Tell it where to go, silly!" called the bus-driver, who was watching them with great interest.

"To the Mill," said Peter, and immediately the boat shot off down-stream, doing little zigzags now and again in a very light-hearted manner. It wasn't long before they came to an old Mill. Its big wa-ter-wheel was working and made a loud noise. Behind it was a hill, and on the top was what looked like a small castle.

"That's where Mr. Spells lives," said Peter. "Come on—out we get, and up the hill we go."

So up the hill they went and came at last to the curious castle-like house.

But when they got near they heard loud shouts and thumps and yells, and they stopped in alarm.

"Whatever's going on?" said Mollie. "Is some-body quarrelling?"

The children tiptoed to the house and peeped in at one of the windows, the one where the noise seemed to be coming from. They saw a peculiar sight!

Chinky and a nasty-looking little goblin seemed to be playing musical chairs! The children saw the six chairs there that they had seen the day before in Mr. Polish's shop, and first Chinky would dart at one and look at it carefully and try to pull it away, and then the goblin would. Then Mr. Spells, who looked a very grand kind of enchanter, would pull the chairs away from each and then smack both the goblin and Chinky with his stick.

Roars and bellows came from the goblin and howls from Chinky. Oh, dear. Whatever was hap-pening?

"Chinky must have found out that the chairs had gone to Mr. Spells, and gone to get our own chair," said Peter. "And the goblin must have gone to get it at the same time. Can you see the blue handkerchief we tied on our own chair, Mollie?"

"No. It's gone. Somebody took it off," said Mollie. "I believe I can see it sticking out of Chinky's pocket—I expect he guessed we marked the chair that way and took the hanky off in case the goblin or Mr. Spells guessed there was some-thing unusual about that particular chair."

"Sir!" cried Chinky suddenly, turning to Mr. Spells, "I tell you once more that I am only here to fetch back one of these chairs, a wishing-chair, which belongs to me and my friends. This goblin stole it from us—and now he's come to get it back again from you. He'll sell it again, and steal it— he's a bad fellow."

Smack! The goblin thumped Chinky hard and he yelled. Mr. Spells roared like a lion. "I don't believe either of you. You're a couple of rogues. These chairs are MY CHAIRS, all of them, and I don't believe any of them is a wishing-chair. Wish- ing-chairs have wings, and not one of these has."

"But I tell you ..." began Chinky, and then stopped as the enchanter struck him lightly with his wand, and then struck the goblin, too.

Chinky sank down into a deep sleep and so did the goblin. "Now I shall have a little peace at last," said Mr. Spells. "And I'll find out which chair is a wishing-chair—if these fellows are speaking the truth!"

He went out of the room, and the children heard him stirring something somewhere. He was prob-ably making a "Find-out" spell!

"Come on—let's get into the room and drag Chinky out whilst he's gone," said Peter. "We sim-ply must rescue him!"

So they crept in through the window and bent over Chinky. And just at that very moment they felt a strong draught blowing round them!

They looked at each of the chairs—yes, one of them had grown wings, and was flapping them, making quite a wind! Hurray—now they could fly off in the Wishing-Chair, and cram Chinky in with them, fast asleep.

"Quick, oh, quick—Mr. Spells is coming back!" said Peter.  
"Help me with Chinky—quick, Mollie, QUICK!"

### MR. SPELLS IS VERY MAGIC

The Wishing-Chair stood with the other five chairs, its red wings flapping strongly. The children caught hold of the sleeping pixie and dragged him to the chair. He felt as heavy as lead! If only he would wake up.

"He's in a terribly magic sleep," said Mollie in despair. "Now—lift him, Peter—that's right—and put him safely on the seat of the chair. Oh dear, he's rolling off again. Do. do be quick!"

They could hear Mr. Spells muttering in the next room, stirring something in a pot. In a few moments he would have made his find-out spell to see which was the Wishing-Chair, and would come back into the room. They must get away first!

The chair's wings were now fully grown, and it was doing little hops on the ground as if it were impatient to be off. The children sat down in it, holding Chinky tightly. Tricky the goblin was still lying on the floor, fast asleep. Good!

"Fly home, chair, fly home!" commanded Peter. Just in time, too, because as he spoke the children could hear the wizard's step coming towards them from the next room. He appeared at the door, carrying something in a shining bottle.

The chair had now risen in the air, flapping its wings, and was trying to get out of the window.

It was an awkward shape for the chair to get through, and it turned itself sideways so that the children and Chinky

almost fell out! They clung to the arms in fright, trying to stop Chinky from rolling off.

"Hey!" cried the wizard in the greatest astonishment. "What are you doing? Why, the chair's grown wings! Who are you, children—and what are you doing with my chair? Come back."

But by this time the chair was out of the window and was the right way up again, much to the children's relief. It flew up into the air.

"Good! We've escaped children—and we've got both the chair and Chinky," said Peter, pleased. "Even if he is asleep, we've got him. We'll have to ask the elf if he knows how to wake him up."

But Peter spoke too soon. Mr. Spells was too clever to let the chair escape quite so easily. He came running out into the little garden in front of his castle-like cottage, carrying something over his arm.

"What's he going to do?" said Mollie. "What's he got, Peter?"

They soon knew! It was a very, very long rope, with a loop at the end to lasso them with! Mr. Spells swung the loops of rope round for a second or two, then flung the rope up into the air. The loops unwound and the last loop of all almost touched them. But not quite! The chair gave a jump of fright and rose a little higher.

"Oh, do go quickly, chair!" begged Mollie.

"The wizard is gathering up the rope to throw it

again. Look out—here it comes! Oh, Peter, it's going to catch us—it's longer than ever!"

The rope sped up to them like a long, thin snake. The last loop of all fell neatly round the chair, but, before it could tighten, Peter caught hold of it and threw it off. He really did it very cleverly indeed.

"Oh, Peter—you are marvellous!" cried Mollie. "I really thought we were caught that time. Surely we are out of reach now—the wizard looks very small and far away."

Once more the rope came flying towards the Wishing-Chair, and it tried to dodge it, almost up-

setting the children altogether. The rope darted after the chair, fell firmly round it - and before Peter could throw it off it had tightened itself round the chair and the children too!

Peter struggled hard to get a knife to cut the rope—but his arms were pinned tightly to his sides and he couldn't put his hands into his pockets. Mollie tried to help him, but it was no use. Mr. Spells was hauling on the rope and the chair was going gradually down and down and down.

"Oh dear—we're caught!" said Mollie in despair. "Just when we had so nearly escaped, too! Peter, do think of something."

But Peter couldn't. Chinky might have been able to think of some spell to get rid of the rope but he was still fast asleep. Mollie had to use both hands to hold him on the chair in case he fell off.

Down went the chair, pulling against the rope and making things as difficult as possible for the wizard, who was in a fine old temper when at last he had the chair on the ground.

"What do you mean by this?" he said sternly. "What kind of behaviour is this—coming to my house, stealing one of the chairs I bought—the Wishing-Chair, too, the best of the lot? I didn't even know one of the chairs was a magic chair when I bought the set."

Mollie was almost crying. Peter looked sulky as he tried to free his arms from the tight rope.

"You'll keep that rope round you for the rest of the day," said Mr. Spells. "Just to teach you that you can't steal from a wizard."

"Let me free," said Peter. "I'm not a thief, and I haven't stolen this chair—unless you call taking something that really belongs to us stealing. I don't!"

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Spells. "I'm tired of hearing people say this chair is theirs. Tricky said it—Chinky said it—and now you say it! It can't belong to all of you—and, anyway, I bought it with my money."

"Mr. Spells, this Wishing-Chair is ours," said Peter patiently. "It lives in our playroom, and Chinky the pixie shares it with us and looks after it. Tricky stole it and sold it to Mr. Polish, who had five other chairs like it."

"And then Tricky told you about the six old chairs and you went and bought them," said Mollie. "And Tricky came to-night to get back the Wish-ing-Chair because it's valuable and he can sell it to somebody else!"

"And then Chinky came to try and tell you about it before Tricky stole it," went on Peter. "And I suppose they came at the same time and quarrelled about it."

"Well, well!" said Mr. Spells, who had been listening in surprise. "This is a queer story, I must say. It's true that I came in from the garden to find the goblin and the pixie behaving most peculiarly. They kept sitting down first on one chair and then on another—trying to find out which was the Wish-ing-Chair, I suppose—and shouting at one another all the time."

"I'd tied my blue hanky on the right arm of the Wishing-Chair," said Mollie.

"Yes—I saw it there and wondered why," said Mr. Spells. "I can see it in Chinky's pocket now—he must have recognized it as yours and taken it off. Well, I suppose you came in just at the moment when I was angry with them both, and put them into a magic sleep."

"Yes," said Peter. "Then you went out and we thought we'd escape if we could, taking Chinky with us. The chair suddenly grew its wings, you see."

"Mr. Spells, can we have back our chair, please, now that you've heard our story?" begged Mollie. "I know you've paid some money to Mr. Polish for it—but couldn't you get it back from Tricky the goblin? After all, he's the rogue in all this, isn't he—not us or Chinky?"

"You're quite right," said Mr. Spells. "And I think it was very brave of you to come to rescue Chinky. I'm sorry I put him into a magic sleep now—but I'll wake him up again. And now I'll take the rope off and set you free!"



He took the rope off Peter and then lifted Chinky from the Wishing-Chair and laid him down on the floor. He drew a white ring of chalk round him and then a ring of blue inside the white circle. Then he called loudly.

"Cinders! Where are you? Dear me, that cat is never about when he's wanted!"

There was a loud miaow outside the window.

In jumped a big black cat with green eyes that shone like traffic signals! He ran to Mr. Spells.

"Cinders, I'm going to do a wake-up spell," said the wizard. "Go and sit in the magic ring and sing with me whilst I chant the spell."

Cinders leapt slightly over the chalk rings and sat down close to the sleeping Chinky. Mr. Spells began to walk round and round, just outside the ring, chanting a curious song. It sounded like:-

"Birriloola-kummi-pool, Rimminy, romminy, rye, Tibbynooka-falli-lool, Open your sleepy eye!"

All the time the wizard chanted this queer song the cat kept up a loud miaowing as if he were join-ing in too.

The spell was a very good one, because at the end of the chant, Chinky opened first one eye and then the other. He sat up, looking extermely sur-prised.

"I say," he began, "what's happened? Where am I? Oh, hallo, Peter and Mollie! I've been look-ing for you everywhere!"

"And we 've been looking for you!" said Mollie. "You've been in a magic sleep. Get up and come home with us. The

Wishing-Chair has grown its wings again."

Then Chinky saw Mr. Spells standing nearby, tall and commanding, and he went rather pale. "But, I say—what does Mr. Spells think about all this?" he said, nervously.

"I have heard the children's story and it is quite plain that the chair really does belong to you," he

said. "I'll get the money back from Tricky."

"Well, he's very tricky, so be careful of him," said Chinky, sitting down in the Wishing-Chair with the children.

"He'll get a shock when he wakes up," said Mr. Spells, and he suddenly touched the sleeping goblin with the toe of his foot. "Dimini, dimini, dimini, diminish!" he cried suddenly, and lo and behold the goblin shrank swiftly to a very tiny creature indeed, diminishing rapidly before the astonished eyes of the watching children.

Mr. Spells picked up the tiny goblin, took a matchbox off the mantelpiece, popped him into it, shut the box and put it back on the mantelpiece.

"He won't cause me any trouble when he wakes up!" he said. "No, not a bit! Well, good-bye. I'm glad this has all ended well—but I do wish that chair was mine."

The children waved good-bye and the chair rose into the air. "Shall we go home?" said Peter.

"No," said Mollie, suddenly remembering the satchel of sandwiches and cake that Peter still carried. "We'll take Chinky off for the day, pic-nicking! We deserve a nice peaceful day after such a thrilling adventure."

"Right!" said Peter and Chinky nodded happily. "Wishing-Chair, take us to the nicest picnic spot you know!" And off they flew at once, to have a very happy day together.

## OFF ON ANOTHER ADVENTURE!

For a whole week the children watched and waited for the Wishing-Chair to grow its wings again. It didn't sprout them at all! The wings had vanished as soon as it had arrived safely back in the play-room.

"I hope its magic isn't getting less," said Mollie, one day, as they sat in the playroom, playing ludo together. It was their very favourite game, and they always laughed at Chinky because he made such a fuss when he didn't get "home" before they did.

As they sat playing together they felt a welcome draught. "Oh, lovely! A breeze at last!" said Mollie thankfully. "I do really think this is just about the hottest day we've had these holidays!"

"The wind must have got up a bit at last," said Peter. "Blow, wind, blow—you are making us lovely and cool."

"Funny that the leaves on the trees aren't moving, isn't it?" said Chinky.

Mollie looked out of the open door at the trees in the garden. They were perfectly still! "But there isn't a breeze, she said, and then a sudden thought struck her. She looked round at the Wishing-Chair, which was standing just behind them.

"Look!" she cried. "How silly we are! It isn't the wind—it's the Wishing-Chair that has grown

its wings again. They are flapping like anything!"

So they were. The children and Chinky sprang up in delight. "Good! We could just do with a lovely cool ride up in the air to-day," said Peter. "Wish-ing-Chair, we are very pleased with you!"

The Wishing-Chair flapped its wings very strongly again and gave a creak. Then Chinky noticed something.

"I say, look—it's only grown three wings instead of four. What's happened? It's never done that before."

They all stared at the chair. One of its front legs hadn't grown a wing. It looked rather queer without it.

Chinky looked at the chair rather doubtfully. "Do you think it can fly with only three wings?" he said. "This is rather a peculiar thing to happen, really. I wonder if we ought to fly off in the chair if it's only got three wings instead of four."

"I don't see why not," said Mollie. "After all, an aeroplane can fly with three engines, if the fourth one stops."

The chair gave a little hop up in the air as if to say it could fly perfectly well. "Oh, come along!" said Chinky. "We'll try. I'm sure it will be all right. But I wish I knew what to do to get the fourth wing to grow. Something has gone wrong, it's plain."

They got into the chair, Chinky as usual sitting on the back, holding on to their shoulders. The chair flew to the door.

"Where shall we go?" said Chinky.

"Well—we never did get to the Land of Goodness. Where after all," said Mollie. "Shall we try to get there again? We know it's a good way away, so it should be a nice long flight, very cool and windy high up in the air."

"We may as well," said Chinky. "Fly to the Land of Goodness Knows Where, Chair. We saw it on the map—it's due east from here, straight towards where the sun rises—you go over the Tiptop Mountains, past the Crazy Valley and then down by the Zigzag Coast."

"It sounds exciting," said Mollie. "Oh, isn't it lovely to be cool again? It's so very hot to-day."

They were now high up in the air, and a lovely breeze blew past them as they flew. Little clouds, like puffs of cotton wool, floated below them. Mollie leaned out to get hold of one as they passed.

"This is fun," she said. "Chinky, is there a land of ice-creams? If so, I'd like to go there some-time!"

"I don't know. I've never heard of one," said Chinky. "There's a Land of Goodies though, I know that. It once came to the top of the Faraway Tree, and I went there. It was lovely—biscuits growing on trees, and chocolates sprouting on bushes."

"Oh—did you see Moon-Face and Silky and the old Saucepan Man?" asked Mollie, in excitement. "I've read the books about the Faraway Tree, and I've always wished I could climb it."

"Yes, I saw them all," said Chinky. "Silky is sweet, you'd love her. But Moon-Face was cross because somebody had taken all his slippery-slip cushions—you know, the cushions he keeps in his room at the top of the tree for people to sit on when they slide down from the top to the bottom."

"I wouldn't mind going to the Land of Goodies at all," said Peter. "It sounds really fine. I almost wish we'd told the chair to go there instead of the Land of Goodness Knows Where."

"Well, don't change its mind for it," said Chinky. "It doesn't like that. Look, there are the Tip-Top Mountains."

They all leaned out to look. They were very extraordinary mountains, running up into high, jagged peaks as if somebody had drawn them higgledy-piggledy with a pencil, up and down, up and down.

On they went, through a batch of tiny little clouds; but Mollie didn't try to catch any of these because, just in time, she saw that baby elves were fast asleep on them, one to each cloud.

"They make good cradles for a hot day like this," explained Chinky.

After a while, Mollie noticed that Chinky was leaning rather hard on her shoulder, and that Peter seemed to be leaning against her, too. She pushed them back.

"Don't lean so heavily on me," she said.

"We don't mean to," said Peter. "But I seem to be leaning that way all the time! I do try not to."

"Why are we, I wonder?" said Chinky. Then he gave a cry. "Why, the chair's all on one side. No wonder Peter and I keep going over on to you, Mollie. Look—it's tipped sideways!"

"What's the matter with it?" said Mollie. She tried to shake the chair upright by swinging her-self about in it, but it always over-balanced to the left side as soon as she had stopped swinging it to and fro.

They all looked in alarm at one another as the chair began to tip more and more to one side. It was very difficult to sit in it when it tipped like that.

"It's because it's only got three wings!" said Chinky, suddenly. "Of course—that's it! The one wing on this side is tired out, and so the chair is flying with only two wings really, and it's tipping over. It will soon be on its side in the air!"

"Gracious! Then for goodness' sake let's go down to the ground at once," said Mollie, in alarm. "We shall fall out if we don't."

"Go down to the ground, Chair," commanded Peter, feeling the chair going over to one side even more. He looked over the side. The one wing there had already stopped flapping. The chair was using only two wings—they would soon be tired out, too!

The chair flew heavily down to the ground and landed with rather a bump. Its wings stopped flap-ping and hung limp. It creaked dolefully. It was quite exhausted, that was plain!

"We shouldn't have flown off on it when it only had three wings," said Chinky. "It was wrong of us. After all, Peter and Mollie, you have grown bigger since last holidays, and must be heavier. The chair can't possibly take us all unless it has four wings to fly with."

They stood and looked at the poor, tired Wish-ing-Chair. "What are we going to do about it?" said Peter.

"Well —we must try to find out where we are first," said Chinky, looking round. "And then we must ask if there is a witch or wizard or magician anywhere about that can give us something to make the chair grow another wing. Then we'd better take it straight home for a rest."

"Look," said Mollie, pointing to a nearby sign-post. "It says, 'To the Village of Slipperies.' Do you know that village,

Chinky?"

"No. But I've heard of it," said Chinky. "The people there aren't very nice—slippery as eels — can't trust them or believe a word they say. I don't think we'll go that way."

He went to look at the other arm of the sign—post and came back looking very pleased.

"It says 'Dame Quick-Fingers'," he said. "She's my great-aunt. She'll help us all right. She'll be sure to know a spell for growing wings. She keeps a pack of flying dogs, you know, because of the Slipperies—they simply fly after them when they come to steal her chickens and ducks."

"Goodness—I'd love to see some flying dogs," said Mollie. "Where does this aunt of yours live?"

"Just down the road, round a corner, and by a big rowan tree," said Chinky. "She's really nice. I dare say she'd ask us to tea if we are as polite as possible. She loves good manners."

"Well—you go and ask her if she knows how to grow an extra wing on our chair," said Mollie. "We'd better stay here with the chair, I think, in case anyone thinks of stealing it again. We can easily bring it along to your aunt's cottage, if she's in. We won't carry it all the way there in case she's not."

"Right. I'll go," said Chinky. "I won't be long. You just sit in the chair till I come back —and don't you let anyone steal it."

He ran off down the road and disappeared round a corner. Mollie and Peter sat down in the chair to wait. The chair creaked. It sounded very tired in—deed. Mollie patted its



arms. "You'll soon be all right once you have got a fourth wing," she said. "Cheer up."

Chinky hadn't been gone very long before the sound of footsteps made the children look round. Five little people were coming along the road from the Village of Slipperies. They looked most peculiar.

"They must be Slipperies," said Peter, sitting up. "Now we must be careful they don't play a trick on us and get the chair away. Aren't they queer-looking?"

The five little creatures came up and bowed low. "Good-day," they said. "We come to greet you and to ask you to visit our village."

#### THE SLIPPERIES PLAY A TRICK!

Peter and Mollie looked hard at the five Slipperies. Each Slippery had one blue eye and one green, and not one of them looked straight at the children! Their hair was slick and smooth, their mouths smiled without stopping, and they rubbed their bony hands together all the time.

"I'm sorry," said Peter, "but we don't want to leave our chair. We're waiting here with it till our friend Chinky comes back from seeing his Great- Aunt Quick-Fingers."

"Oh, she's gone to market," said one of the Slipperies. "She always goes on Thursdays."

"Oh dear," said Peter. "How tiresome! Now we shan't be able to get a fourth wing for our Wishing-Chair."

"Dear me — is this a Wishing-Chair?" said the Slipperies, in great interest. "It's the first time we've seen one. Do let us sit in it."

"Certainly not," said Peter, feeling certain that if he let them sit in the chair they would try to fly off in it.

"I hear that Great-Aunt Quick-Fingers has some flying dogs," said Mollie, hoping that the Slipperies would look frightened at the mention of them. But they didn't.

They rubbed their slippery hands together again and went on smiling. "Ah, yes — wonderful dogs they are. If you stand up on your chair, and look over the field yonder, you may see some of them flying around," said one Slippery.

The children stood on the seat of the chair. The Slipperies clustered round them. "Now look right down over that field," began one of them. "Do you see a tall tree?"

"Yes," said Mollie.

"Well, look to the right of it and you'll see the roof of a house. And then to the right of that and you'll see another tree," said the Slippery.

"Can't you tell me exactly where to look?" said Mollie, getting impatient. "I can't see a single fly-ing dog. Only a rook or two."

"Well, now look to the left and . . ." began another Slippery, when Peter jumped down from the chair.

"You're just making it all up," he said. "Go on, be off with you! I don't like any of you."

The Slipperies lost their smiles, and looked nasty. They laid hands on the Wishing-Chair.

"I shall whistle for the flying dogs," said Peter suddenly. "Now let me see — what is the whistle, ah, yes ..." And he

suddenly whistled a very shrill whistle indeed.

The Slipperies shot off at once as if a hundred of the flying dogs were after them! Mollie laughed.

"Peter! That's not really a whistle for flying dogs, is it?"

"No, of course not. But I had to get rid of them somehow," said Peter. "I had a feeling they were going to trick us with their silly smiles and rub-bing hands and odd eyes —so I had to think of some way of tricking them instead."

"I wish Chinky would come," said Mollie, sit-ting down in the chair again. "He's been ages. And it's all a waste of time, his going to find his Great- Aunt, if she's at the market. We shall have to go there, I expect, and carry the chair all the way."

"Why, there is Chinky!" said Peter, waving. "Oh, good, he's dancing and smiling. He's got the spell to make another wing grow."

"Then his Great-Aunt couldn't have gone to market!" said Mollie. "Hey, Chinky! Have you got the spell? Was your Great-Aunt Quick-Fingers in?"

"Yes—and awfully pleased to see me," said Chinky, running up. "And she gave me just enough magic to make another wing grow, so we shan't be long now."

"Five Slipperies came up, and they said your Great-Aunt always goes to market on Thursdays," said Mollie.

"You can't believe a word they say," said Chinky. "I told you that. My word, I'm glad they didn't trick you in any way. They usually trick ev-eryone, no matter how clever they may be."

"Well, they didn't trick us," said Peter. "We were much too smart for them—weren't we, Mollie?"

"Yes. They wanted to sit in the chair when they knew it was a Wishing-Chair," said Mollie.

"But we wouldn't let them."

"I should think not," said Chinky. He showed the children a little blue box. "Look —I've got a smear of ointment here that is just enough to grow a red wing to match the other wings. Then the chair will be quite all right."

"Well, let's rub it on," said Peter. Chinky knelt down by the chair — and then he gave a cry of horror.

"What's the matter?" said the children.

"Look — somebody has cut off the other three wings of the chair!" groaned Chinky. "Cut them right off short. There's only a stump left of each."

Mollie and Peter stared in horror. Sure enough the other three wings had been cut right off. But

how? And when? Who could have done it? The children had been with the chair the whole time.

"I do think you might have kept a better guard on the chair," said Chinky crossly. "I really do. Didn't I warn you about the ways of the Slipperies? Didn't I say you couldn't trust them? Didn't I.. ."

"Oh, Chinky - but when could it have been done?" cried Mollie. "I tell you, we were here the whole of the time."

"Standing by the chair?" asked Chinky.

"Yes—or on it," said Peter.

it! Whatever did you stand on it, for?" said Chinky, puzzled. "To stop the Slipperies sitting down?"

"No—to see your Great-Aunt's flying-dogs," said Peter. "The Slipperies said they were over there, and if we would stand up on the chair seat we could just see them flying around. But we couldn't."

"Of course you couldn't," said Chinky. "And for a very good reason, too—they're all at the cottage with my Great-Aunt. I saw them!"

"Oh—the dreadful story-tellers!" cried Mollie. "Peter—it was a trick! Whilst we were standing up there trying to see the dogs, one of the Slipperies must have quietly snipped off the three wings and put them in his pocket."

"Of course!" said Chinky. "Very simple—and you're a pair of simpletons to get taken in by such a silly trick."

Mollie and Peter went very red. "What shall we do?" asked Peter. "I'm very sorry about it. Poor old chair—one wing not grown and the other three snipped away. It's a shame."

"Thank goodness Chinky has the Growing Ointment for wings," said Mollie.

"Yes—but I've only got just enough for one wing," said Chinky. "One wing isn't going to take us very far, is it?"

"No," said Mollie. "Whatever are we going to do?"

"I shall have to ask Great-Aunt Quick-Fingers for some more Growing Ointment, that's all," said Chinky, gloomily. "And this time you can come with me, and bring the chair too. If I

leave you here alone with it, you'll get tricked again, and I shall come back and find the legs are gone next time, and I can't even grow wings on them!"

"It's not nice of you to keep on and on about it, Chinky," said Mollie, lifting up the chair with Peter. "We're very sorry. We didn't know quite how clever the Slipperies were. Oooh—horrid creatures, with their odd eyes and deceitful smiles."

They followed Chinky down the road and along a lane. Soon he came to his Great-Aunt's cottage. It was very snug and small. To Mollie's enormous delight, five or six little brown dogs, rather like spaniels, were flying about the garden on small white wings. They barked loudly and flew to the three of them.

"Now, now—these are friends of mine," said Chinky, and patted the nearest dog, which was flying round his head.

It was strange to have the little dogs sailing about the air like gulls! One flew up to Mollie and rested its front paws on her shoulder. She laughed, and the dog licked her face. Then off it flew again, and chased after a sparrow, barking madly.

Great-Aunt Quick-Fingers came to the door, looking surprised. "Why, Chinky—back again so soon!" she said. "What's happened?"

Chinky told her. "So you see, Great-Aunt, now that the poor chair has lost all its wings, I'm afraid that the Growing Ointment you gave me won't be enough," said Chinky. "I'm so sorry."

"Well, well—it takes a very clever person to see through the Slippery ways," said his Great-Aunt. "You'd better come in and have tea now you're all here!"

The children put down the Wishing-Chair and Great-Aunt Quick-Fingers got the little treacle tarts out of the oven.

"There you are," she said. "Get your fingers nice and sticky with those! I'll go and make some more Growing Ointment for you. It won't take long."

She disappeared, and the children sat and munched the lovely treacle tarts.

Just at that moment she came back, with a fairly large jar. She handed it to Chinky. "There you are. Use that and see what happens. But remember, you can only use it once on anything. The spell doesn't act twice. It's no good trying to use the ointment another time on the chair, to make it grow wings, because it won't be any use."

Chinky dipped his finger into the jar of ointment. It was curious stuff, bright yellow with green streaks in it.

He rubbed some on to a chair leg and immediately a most wonderful wing sprouted out, big and strong!

"I say—it isn't red, as it always is!" cried Mollie. "It's green and yellow—and a much bigger wing than before. I say, Chair, you will look grand. Make another wing come, Chinky."

Soon the Wishing-Chair had four grand green and yellow wings, much bigger than its old red ones. It waved them about proudly.

"You'd better get in the chair and go before it tries its new wings out by itself," said Great-Aunt Quick-Fingers. So in they all got, Chinky on the back, as usual—and off they went!

"Home, Chair, home!" cried everyone, and it rose high in the air, and flew off to the west. "Good-bye and thank you very

much," cried Chinky and the children, and Great-Aunt waved till they were out of sight.

"Well, that was quite a nice little adventure," said Peter.

"And the chair's got some wonderful new wings. I do hope they'll always grow like this in future—big and strong, and all green and yellow!"

MOLLIE AND THE GROWINGOINTMENT



The children were very pleased with the chair's beautiful new green and yellow wings. "They're much better than the little red ones it used to grow," said Peter. "Your Great-Aunt's Growing Ointment is marvellous stuff, Chinky. I only hope the chair will grow its wings more often now."

The green and yellow wings disappeared, of course, as soon as they were all safely at home again. The chair stood still in its place, looking quite ordinary. The children patted it.

"Good old Wishing-Chair. Grow your wings again soon. You haven't taken us to the Land of Goodness Knows Where yet, you know!"

The chair didn't grow its wings again that week. Friday came, Saturday, Sunday, Monday. The children grew tired of asking Chinky if the chair was growing its wings yet.

On Tuesday a spell of rainy weather began. It really was too wet to play any games out of doors at all. The children went down to their playroom day after day to play with Chinky, and that was fun. But on Friday Chinky said he really must go and see how his dear old mother was.

"I haven't seen her since I came back to you with the chair," he said. "I must go to-day."

"Oh, bother! We shall have to do without you," said Mollie. "Just suppose the chair grows its wings, Chinky, and you're not here."

"Well, that's easy," said Chinky, with a grin. "Simply sit in it and wish it to go to my mother's. She will be very pleased to see you, and then we can all three of us go adventuring somewhere."

"Oh, yes—we'll do that, if only the chair grows wings," said Peter. "Well, good-bye, Chinky. Will you be back to-night?"

"Yes," said Chinky. "I'll be sleeping on the old sofa as usual, don't worry. I'm not taking my wand with me, by the way, so keep an eye on it, will you?"

Chinky had just bought a new wand, a very use—ful one that had quite a bit of magic in it. He was very proud of it, and kept it in the cupboard with the toys and games.

"Yes—we'll look after it for you," said Peter. "And we won't use it, we promise."

"I know you won't," said Chinky. "Well, see you to-night."

Off he went to catch the bus to his mother's cottage, dressed in his mackintosh and sou'wester. The children felt decidedly dull when he had gone.

"Game of ludo, Mollie?" said Peter.

"No. I'm bored with ludo to-day," said Mollie.

"Well, you're not going to be very good com—pany, then," said Peter, taking down a book. "I'll read. You can tell me when you've finished being bored and we'll think up an exciting game."

Mollie lay down on the rug and shut her eyes.

What a pity it had rained and rained so long. Even if the Wishing-Chair grew its wings, it wouldn't be much fun going out in the rain. They would have to take an umbrella with them.

Mollie opened her eyes and looked out of the window. Why, the sun was shining—and yet it was still raining.

"I say, Peter, look at this rainbow," said Mollie. "It's glorious. Oh —wouldn't it be lovely to fly off to a rainbow in the Wishing-Chair! If it looks as beautiful as this far away, whatever would it look like very near to us? Oh, I do wish the Wish- ing-Chair would grow its wings this very after-noon."

Peter took no notice. He was deep in his book. Mollie felt cross. She wandered round the room and opened a little cupboard where Chinky kept some of his things. There on the shelf was the jar of Growing Ointment that Great-Aunt Quick-Fin-gers had given him to make the wings of the Wish-ing-Chair sprout again.

Mollie took down the jar and opened the lid. There was plenty of ointment left—yellow with streaks of green in it. She wondered if perhaps it would make the chair's wings grow again, although Chinky's Great-Aunt had said it only acted once on anything.

"I'll try it," thought Mollie. "And I won't tell Peter! If the wings grow, I'll fly off in the Wish- ing-Chair without him, and go to Chinky's alone. That will serve him right for not answering when I

speak to him!"

She went over to the Wishing-Chair and rubbed a little of the ointment on one of the front legs. Nothing happened at all. She couldn't feel even a tiny bud of a wing beginning to grow; the Grow-ing Ointment certainly didn't act twice. Great-Aunt Quick-Fingers was right.

Then a wonderful thought came to Mollie. Why shouldn't she try a little of the magic ointment on something else? She

looked round. Her dolls, for instance! Oh, if only she could make wings grow on Rosebud, her prettiest doll. That would be re-ally wonderful.

Feeling very excited, Mollie took her doll Rosebud from her cot. She rubbed a little of the green and yellow ointment on to her back—and, hey presto, wing-buds began to form—and little green and yellow wings sprouted out on the doll's back.

And she suddenly left Mollie's knee and flew —yes, flew—round the playroom. She flew near Peter and he felt the wind of her little wings. He looked up—and his eyes almost dropped out of his head as he saw Rosebud flying gaily round the room!

Mollie laughed in delight and tried to catch the doll as she flew past. "I've put some of the Grow-ing Ointment on her back," she said. "You know -what Chinky's Great-Aunt gave him for grow-ing wings on the Wishing-Chair. And Rosebud grew wings!"

"Well, I never!" said Peter in amazement. "I say —do you think my engine would grow wings, too?" said Peter suddenly. He had a wonderful clockwork engine, a perfect model that he was very proud of.

"Oh, yes—let's try and see," said Mollie. So they got the engine and Peter smeared a little of the ointment on to it. It sprouted out small wings at once!

It flew from Peter's hand and joined the doll. The children laughed till their sides ached to see the two toys behaving like this. They really did look extraordinary.

And then Mollie and Peter went quite mad with the ointment. They smeared it on to a top and that flew round the room, spinning as it went! They smeared the skittles and

they all shot round and round, some of them bumping into one another in the air.

They made some of the little toy soldiers fly, and they even gave the bricks in their brick box wings to fly with. All these things flapped their way round the room, and Mollie and Peter screamed with laughter as they tried to dodge the flying toys.

Mollie went to the toy cupboard to see if any toy was there that could be made to fly as well. She picked up Chinky's new wand and put it on one side—but, dear me, her fingers were smeared with the Growing Ointment and the wand at once grew tiny, graceful green and yellow wings, too! It flew out of the cupboard and joined the flying

toys.

"Oh dear—there goes the wand," said Mollie. "I do hope Chinky won't mind. I just touched it by accident with the ointment smeared on my fingers, and it grew wings."

"Look—I've made the teapot fly," said Peter, and roared with laughter to see it flapping its way round the room. "Look at the skittles colliding again."

The wind suddenly blew the door wide open. Then a dreadful thing happened. Rosebud the doll, the teapot, the wand; in fact everything that had grown wings shot straight out of the open door, flew down to the bottom of the garden and van—ished!

"Ooooh!" said Mollie in fright.

"They've gone," said Peter, and rushed to the open door. But he could see nothing. No Rosebud was there, no engine, nothing. They had all van—ished into the blue.

"Oh dear—shall we get them back?" said Mollie. "Why did I ever begin to smear the Grow-ing Ointment on anything? It was a very silly idea. Now I've lost Rosebud."

"And what about my lovely model engine?" said Peter. "And I say—Chinky's magic wand has gone, too!"ssss

They stared at one another in dismay. Chinky's new wand, that he had saved up for and was so proud of! It had grown wings and now it had flown out of the door and vanished, too. This was dreadful.

"We shall have to tell Chinky when he gets back to-night, and ask him if we can possibly get the things back," said Mollie. "If we knew where they had gone we could go and fetch them. Do you suppose they've gone to Great-Aunt Quick-Fingers?"

They said no more to one another, but sat solemnly side by side, hoping and hoping and hoping that the things would fly back as unexpectedly as they had flown away. But they didn't.

Chinky came back at half-past six, looking very merry and bright, and bringing a big chocolate cake from his mother. He stopped when he saw their doleful faces.

"What's up?" he said. "Anything happened?"

They told him, and Chinky listened in astonishment. He leapt to his feet when they spoke about his wand.

"WHAT! You don't mean to tell me you were silly enough to meddle with my wand—surely you didn't make my wand grow wings, too!"

"It was an accident," said poor Mollie. "I must have had some of the ointment on my fingers when I moved it—and so it grew wings, too. I'm so sorry, Chinky."

"Where have the things gone, Chinky?" asked Peter.

"I don't know," said Chinky. "I haven't the least idea. All I can say is—the next time the Wishing- Chair grows its wings, we'll have to tell it to go wherever the toys have gone—but goodness knows where it will take us to!"

## OFF TO FIND THE TOYS

Chinky was gloomy and cross that evening. The children were sad, and felt ashamed that they had gone quite so mad with the Growing Ointment. They felt very guilty indeed about Chinky's wand.

"Will you come and tell us if the Wishing-Chair grows its wings again to-night, Chinky?" asked Mollie when it was time for them to go back to the house.

"I might," said Chinky gruffly. "And I might not. I might go off by myself in it."

"Oh, no, don't do that," begged Mollie. "That would be horrid of you. Dear Chinky, please be nice and forgive us for losing your wand."

"All right," said Chinky, cheering up a little.

"I really do feel very upset about losing my doll Rosebud, you know," went on poor Mollie. "I feel just as upset about her as you feel about your wand."

"And I'm miserable about my engine," said Peter. "It was the finest I ever had."

"Well—we'll hope the Wishing-Chair grows its wings again to-night, then, and we can go and fetch everything," said Chinky.

"I'll come and tap on your windows if it grows its wings."

But Chinky didn't tap on their windows at all. The chair didn't grow any wings in the night.

Mollie sighed.

"Just when we so badly want it to fly, it won't grow wings! Now to-day we've got to behave nicely and be on our best behaviour, because Mother's got visitors. Perhaps we shan't be able to go down to the playroom at all."

At eleven o'clock, when the visitors had arrived and Mother was giving them coffee and the children were handing round plates of biscuits and buns, Chinky appeared at the window.

He was horrified when he saw so many people there and disappeared at once. The children caught sight of him.

They looked at one another in despair. Now what were they to do? There was only one thing. They must do something to make Mother send them out of the room.

So Mollie suddenly spilt the plate of biscuits all over the floor, and Peter spilt a cup of coffee.

Mother looked vexed. "Oh, dear—how clumsy of you!" she said. "Go and ask Jane if she will please bring a cloth, Mollie. And I think you and Peter had better go now. I don't want anything else spilt."

"Sorry, Mother," said Peter.



They shot out of the room. Mollie called to Jane to take a cloth to wipe up the coffee, and then both children raced down to the playroom.

"I hope Chinky hasn't gone off in the chair by himself," panted Peter. "If he saw us with all those visitors he might think we couldn't possibly come - and then he'd fly off alone."

They got to the playroom door just as Chinky was flying out in the Wishing-Chair. They bumped into one another, and Peter caught hold of one of the chair's legs.

"Just in time!" he cried. "Help us up, Chinky!"

Chinky pulled them up with him. Then the chair flapped its green and yellow wings and flew strongly up into the air.

"I was afraid you wouldn't be able to come," said Chinky. "I was just setting off by myself. The chair had only grown its wings a few minutes before I peeped in at the window."

"What fine, big, strong wings it's got now," said Peter. "They make quite a draught round my legs. It will be able to fly faster now."

"Where are we going?" asked Mollie.

"I don't know," said Chinky. "I just said to the chair, 'Go and find my wand, and Rosebud, and the rest of the toys,' and it seemed to know the place I meant, because it rose up at once. I've no idea where we shall land. I only hope it's somewhere nice. It would be awful to go to the Village of Slipperies, or to the Land of Rubbish, or somewhere like that."

"Oh dear—I hope it's somewhere nice, too," said Mollie. "The chair is flying very high, isn't it?"

"Do you think it may be going to Toyland?" asked Peter. "I wouldn't mind that at all. After all, most of the things were toys. I think it's very likely they may have gone there."

"It certainly seems to be taking the way to

Toyland as far as I remember," said Chinky, peering down. "I know we pass over the Village of Golliwogs before we reach Toyland, and we're very near that now. There's Toyland, far over there. That must be where we're going."

But it wasn't. The chair suddenly began to fly down and down at a great rate, and it was plain that it was going to land.

"Well! This isn't Toyland!" said Chinky in surprise. "Good gracious! I do believe it's the school run by Mister Grim, for Bad Brownies. Surely the toys haven't gone there!"

The chair landed in the grounds of a big house, just near a wall. Chinky and the children got off. They pushed the chair under a bush to hide it. Then they looked cautiously round.

From the big building in the distance came a chanting noise. The children and Chinky listened.

"I mustn't scream or whistle or shout Because Mister Grim is always about, I mustn't stamp or slam any door Or jump or slide on the schoolroom floor, I mustn't be greedy, untidy or lazy Because Mister Grim would be driven

quite crazy, I mustn't be slow, and I MUST be quick, Because Mister Grim has a very BIG STICK!" "Ooooh!" said Mollie. "I

don't like the sound of that. That must be the poor Bad Brownies learn-ing verses for Mr. Grim."

"Yes," said Chinky. "I do wish we hadn't come

here. I've half a mind to get in the Wishing-Chair and go off again. I've always been told that Mister Grim is a very hard master. We don't want to be caught by him."

"CaughtV said Peter. "But we're two children and a pixie—we're not brownies—and this is a school for brownies."

"I know," said Chinky. "I just don't like the feel of this place, that's all. If you think it's all right, we'll stay and see if we can possibly find where our toys are."

"I think we'd better," said Peter. "Well—what's the first thing to do?"

"Listen—is that the brownies coming out to play?" said Mollie as a perfect babel of noise reached them. Then came the sound of feet run-ning and in a trice about fifty small brownies sur-rounded them. They all looked merry, mischievous little fellows, too young to have grown their brownie beards yet.

"Who are you? Are you new pupils for this awful school?" asked a small brownie, pushing himself forward. "My name's Winks. What's yours?"

All the little brownies crowded round, listen-ing eagerly. Chinky pushed them back.

"Don't crowd so. No, we haven't come to your school. We came because we're looking for things we've lost, and we think they may be somewhere here. My name's Chinky. These are real children, Peter and Mollie"

"Well, be careful Mister Grim doesn't see you," said Winks. "He's in a very bad temper these days—worse than he's ever been."

"Why?" asked Peter.

"Because we found the cupboard where he kept his canes and we broke the whole lot!" chuckles the brownie. "Every one of them."

"Can't he slap you or smack you, though?" said Peter.

"Oh, yes—but we dodge," said Winks. "Can't dodge a cane very well, though. I say —do be care→ful he doesn't catch you."

"What are you looking for?" asked another brownie. "I'm Hoho; you can trust me."

"Well, said Chinky, "we came here to look for a lot of flying toys—and my new wand. It had wings, too."

"Flying toys!" said Winks. "And a flying wand. Well! Have we seen anything like that, boys?"

"Yes!" shouted Hoho at once. "Don't you re→member? Yesterday evening we saw something very peculiar—we thought they were curious birds flying about in the air. They must have been your toys."

"What happened to them?" asked Peter.

"Well, old Grim was out in the garden smoking his evening pipe," said Hoho. "And he suddenly looked up and saw them, too. He was very excited, and called out some words we couldn't hear "

"And what we thought were the peculiar birds came right down to him," said Winks. "But they must have been your toys on the way to Toyland!"

He caught sight of them and made them come to him!"

"Well, whatever can he do with them?" said Hoho. "We are never allowed any toys at all. I suppose he will sell them to his friend the Magician Sly-Boots."

"Oh dear," said Mollie. "Well, we must try and get them before he does. Will you show us where you think Mister Grim might have hidden our toys?"

"Yes, we'll show you!" shouted the brownies. "But do be careful you aren't caught!"

They took Chinky and the children to the big building, all walking on tiptoe and shushing each other.

Hoho led them inside. He pointed to a winding stair. "Go up there," he whispered. "You'll come to a little landing. On the left side is a door. That's the storeroom, where I expect Mister Grim has put the toys."

"Creep in—and see if you can find them," whispered Winks.

"Come on," said Chinky to the others. "It's now or never! If we find our things we'll take them and rush down and out into the garden, and be off in the Wishing-Chair before Mister Grim even knows we're here!"

"Sh!" said Mollie, and they all began to go up the stairs on tiptoe. "Shhhhhhh!"

MISTER GRIM'S SCHOOL FOR BAD BROWNIES

Up the stairs went the three, treading very quietly indeed, hoping that not one of the stairs would creak or crack.

The brownies crowded round the door at the bottom of the stairs, holding their breath and watch-ing. Up and up and up—and there was the landing at last! Now for the door on the left.

They saw the door. They tiptoed to it and Peter turned the handle. Would it be locked? No, it wasn't!

They peeped inside. Yes, it was the storeroom, and stacks of books, pencils, rulers, ink-bottles, old desks, and all kinds of things were there.

"Can't see our toys," whispered Chinky. "or my wand. Let's look in all the drawers and all the cup-boards."

So they began opening the drawers and hunt-ing in them, and pulling open the cupboard doors and peering in at the shelves. But they could find nothing more exciting than books and pens and rubbers.

And then Chinky gave a soft cry. "Look here," he said. "Here they are!"

The other ran quickly over to him. He had opened a big chest—and there, lying quietly in the

top of it, their wings vanished, lay all the toys they had lost — yes, Rosebud was there, and Peter's en-gine, and the top and the soldiers— everything.

But wait—no, not quite everything. "I can't see my wand anywhere," said Chinky, hunting des-perately. "Oh, where is it?"

They hunted all through the chest, but there didn't seem to be any wand there. They looked in despair at one another. They simply must find Chinky's wand.

"I'm glad we've found the toys," whispered Chinky, "but it's dreadful that I can't find my wand. It's got a lot of magic in it, you know. I wouldn't want Mister Grim to use that."

Then the children heard a noise that froze them to the floor. Footsteps —footsteps coming slowly and heavily up the stairs. Not light, quick, brownie steps, but slow, ponderous ones. Would the foot→steps come to the storeroom?

In panic the children and Chinky squeezed themselves into a cupboard, not having time to put away the toys they had pulled out of the chest. The door opened—and somebody walked in!

The children hardly dared to breathe and Chinky almost choked. Then a voice spoke.

"SOMEONE has been here. SOMEONE has tried to steal toys. And that SOMEONE is here still. Come out!"

The children didn't move. They were much too scared to do a thing. And then poor Chinky choked! He choked again, then coughed loudly.

Footsteps marched to the cupboard and the door was flung wide open.

There stood Mister Grim—exactly like his name! He was a big, burly brownie, with a tre→mendous beard falling to the floor. He had pointed ears and shaggy eyebrows that almost hid his eyes.

"HO!" he said in a booming voice. "So the SOMEONE is not one person, but three!"

Peter, Mollie and Chinky came out, poor Chinky still coughing. Mister Grim took them each firmly by the back of the neck and sat them down on the window-seat.

"And now will you kindly tell me why you came to steal my toys?" he said. "How did you know they were there, and who told you about them?"

"They're not your toys, sir," Peter said at last in rather a trembling voice. "They're ours. We let them grow wings yesterday by using Growing Ointment on them—and they flew away. We came to fetch them."

"A very likely story indeed," said Mister Grim scornfully. "And how did you come here?"

"Up the stairs," said Mollie.

Mister Grim frowned a fierce frown. "Don't be foolish, girl," he said. "I mean, how did you arrive here—by bus or train—and how did you get into the grounds?"

Chinky gave the others a sharp nudge. Mollie had just been going to say that they had come in their Wishing-Chair, but she shut her mouth again tightly. Of course she mustn't give that away! Why,

Mister Grim would search the grounds and find it!

"Well?" said Mister Grim. "I am asking you a question—and when I ask questions I expect them to be answered."

Still no reply from any of the three. Mister Grim leaned forward. "Shall I tell you how you came? You must have



friends here among the brownies —and they helped you to climb the wall, and told you to take the toys! Aha! Don't try to say you didn't do that."

They didn't say a word. Mister Grim got up and put the toys back in the chest. "You," he said to Chinky, "yow are a pixie, and I don't usually take pixies into my school. But you are a very bad pixie, I can see, and I shall keep you here. And I shall keep these two as well. I'm not sure what they are—but even if they are real, proper children, which I very much doubt, they deserve to be punished by being my pupils here for a term."

"Oh, no!" said Mollie in horror. "What will our mother say? You can't do that."

"You will see," said Mister Grim. "Now go downstairs, find the brownie called Winks, and tell him you are to come into class when the bell rings. He will give you books and pencils and tell you where to sit."

The three of them had to go downstairs in a row, Mister Grim behind them. They were frightened! Unless they could manage somehow to get to their Wishing-Chair, they would simply have to

stay at Mister Grim's school!

They found Winks and told him quickly what had happened. He was very sorry. "Bad luck!" he said. "Very bad luck. Come on—I'll get you your books and things. Sit by me in class and I'll try and help you all I can."

He took them into a big room and gave them books and pencils. Almost at once a bell rang loudly and all the brownies trooped in quickly. Not one of them spoke a word. They took their places quietly and waited.

"Why were you sent here, Winks?" whispered Chinky as they all waited for Mister Grim to appear.

"Because I used my grandmother's Blue Spell and turned all her pigs blue," whispered back Winks.

"And I was sent here because I put a spell into my father's shoe-tongues and they were rude to him all the way down our street and back," whispered Hoho.

"And I was sent because " began another

brownie, when slow and heavy footsteps were heard. In came Mister Grim and stood at his big desk.

"Sit!" he said, as if the brownies were all little dogs. They sat.

"We have three new pupils," said Mister Grim. "I regret to say that I caught them stealing— STEALING—from my storeroom. If I find out who helped them into this school and told them about the toys they came to steal, I shall take my stick to him. Brrrrrr!"

This was very frightening. Mollie didn't even dare to cry. She comforted herself by thinking of the Wishing-Chair hidden under the bush in the garden. They would run to it as soon as ever they could!

"Now we will have mental numbers," said Mister Grim, and a little groan ran round the class. "You, boy, what number is left when you take eighty-two and sixty-four from one hundred and three?"

He was pointing at poor Peter. Peter went red. What a silly question! You couldn't take eighty- two and sixty-four from one hundred and three.

"Say six hundred and fifty," whispered Winks. "He doesn't know the answer himself!"

"Six hundred and fifty," said Peter boldly. Everyone clapped as if he were right.

"Er—very good," said Mister Grim. Then he pointed to Mollie. "How many pips are there in seven pounds of raspberry jam?"

"Seven pounds of raspberry jam?" repeated Mollie, wondering if she had heard aright. "Er— well. . ." "Say none at all, because your mother only makes raspberry jelly and strains the pips out," whispered Winks.

"Er—none at all," said Mollie. "How do you make that out?" thundered Mister Grim in a very frightening voice.

"Because my mother makes raspberry jelly and strains all the pips out," said Mollie. Everyone clapped again.

"Silence!" said Mister Grim. "Now you, pixie —and see you are very, very careful in your answer. If I take fifty-two hairs from my beard, how many will there be left?"

Chinky stared desperately at the long beard that swept down to the floor. "Well," he began . . . and then Winks whispered to him.

"Say 'the rest'!" he hissed.

"Er—well, the rest of the hair will be left," he said.

Mister Grim suddenly pounded on the desk with his hand. "You, Winks!" he shouted. "I heard you whispering then—you told him the answer—and I believe you told the others the answers, too. Come here! I'll give you the stick. Aha, you

think be—cause all my canes were broken that I haven't got one—but I have! You just wait."

"Please, sir, I'm sorry," said Winks. "I just thought I'd help them as they were new. I was try—ing to be good, sir, and helpful, I really was. You're always telling us to be that, sir."

"No excuses," said Mister Grim, and he turned to a cupboard behind him. He unlocked it and took out a long, thin stick.

"Come up here, Winks," he said, and poor Winks went up. He got two strokes on his hands. Mollie was very upset, but Hoho whispered, "Don't worry—Winks always puts a little spell in his hands and he doesn't mind a bit if he's whacked. He doesn't feel it!"

Mollie felt comforted. Winks winked at her as he went back to his seat. Mister Grim went to take a book from a shelf—and as he turned his back Chinky clutched Peter by the elbow.

"Peter," he hissed, "do you see what his stick is? It's my WAND!"

Peter stared. Yes—the stick on the desk was Chinky's little wand. Oh, if only it had wings now and could fly to Chinky!

But it hadn't. Chinky never took his eyes off it as the class went on and on. "I must get it," he kept saying to himself. "I MUST get it! But how can I? Oh, for a really good idea!"

XII

## CHINKY IS NAUGHTY

Morning school came to an end at last. Mister Grim rapped on his desk with his stick—Chinky's wand!

"Attention, all of you!" he said. "Dinner will be i n ten minutes' time. Anyone who is late or who has dirty hands or untidy hair will go without."

Winks groaned. "It's awful," he said to Peter when Mister Grim had gone out. "There's never enough dinner for everyone, so Mister Grim just says, 'Here, you, your hair is untidy,' or 'Here, you, your nails aren't clean,' and about a dozen of us have to go without our dinner."

"What a dreadful school!" said Peter. "Why don't you run away?"

"How can we?" said Winks. "You've seen the high wall round the grounds, and all the gates are locked. I wish I could get out of here, it's a horrid palce, and I really would be good if I could escape."

"Would there be room for him in the Wishing- Chair, do you think?" whispered Mollie to Chinky. "He's so nice. I'd like to help him, Chinky."

"So would I," whispered back Chinky. "Well, we'll see."

Poor Chinky was one of those who had to go without his dinner. Mister Grim stood at the door of the dining-hall as each brownie walked in. Ev-ery so often he pounced on one and roared at him.

"Here, you, haven't washed behind your ears! No dinner! Here, you, why aren't your nails scrubbed? No dinner!" And when Chinky tried to slip past him he hit him hard on the shoulder with his hand and roared: "Here, you, why haven't you brushed your hair? No dinner!"

"I did brush it," said Chinky indignantly, "but it's the kind of hair that won't lie down."

"No dinner to-day for untidy hair, and no dinner to-morrow for answering back," said Mister Grim.

"Oh, I say, that's not fair," said Chinky.

"And no dinner for the third day for being rude," said Mister Grim. "Another word from you and I'll cane you with this new stick of mine!"

He slapped the wand down so hard on a nearby table that Chinky was afraid it would break in half.

But fortunately it didn't.

Chinky went out of the room, looking angry and sulky. Horrid Mister Grim! He joined all the brownies who were also to go without their dinner.

Peter and Mollie were very sorry for Chinky. When the pudding came they tried to stuff two tarts into their pockets to take to him. But the pastry fell to pieces and their pockets were all jammy and horrid. Mister Grim saw the crumbs of pastry around their pockets as they marched past him after dinner. He tapped them with the wand.

"Aha! Trying to stuff food into your pockets. Greedy children! No dinner for you to-morrow!"

Peter tried to snatch the wand away from Mister Grim, hoping to run and give it to Chinky,

but Mister Grim was too quick for him. Up in the air it went, and poor Peter got a stinging slash on his arm. Fortunately

his sleeve was nice and thick, so he didn't feel it much.

"Bad boy!" roared Mister Grim. "Stay in after school this afternoon and write out one thousand times T must not snatch'."

There was a little time before afternoon school. Peter, Chinky, Mollie and Winks had a meeting in a far corner of the grounds.

"Winks, that's my wand Mister Grim has got and is using for a stick,' said Chinky.

Winks whistled. "I say! That's a fine bit of news. We ought to be able to do something about that."

"But what?" asked Chinky. "I'm so afraid he will break my wand, and then it will be no use. Somehow or other we've got to get it back."

"Now listen," said Winks. "A wand will never hit its owner, you know that. Well, what about being very naughty in class this afternoon and having to go up to Mister Grim to be punished—and your wand will refuse to cane you, of course and surely you can easily get it back then, and do a bit of magic to get yourselves free?"

"Ooh, yes," said Chinky, looking very cheerful. "That's an awfully good idea of yours, Winks. I'd forgotten that a wand never turns against its owner. I'll be very naughty—and then we'll see what happens."

They all went in to afternoon school feeling rather excited. What would happen? It would certainly be fun to see Chinky being very naughty, to begin with—and even greater fun to see the wand refusing to punish him!

Chinky began by yawning very loudly indeed. Mister Grim heard him and tapped hard on his desk with the wand—crack! crack!

"Chinky? You are most impolite. Stand up during the rest of the class instead of sitting."

Chinky stood—but he stood with his back to Mister Grim.

Mister Grim glared. "Bad pixie! You are being impolite again. Stand round the other way!"

Chinky immediately stood on his hands and waved his feet in the air. All the brownies laughed and clapped.

Mister Grim looked as black as thunder. "Come here!" he cried, and Chinky began to walk towards him on his hands. He really looked very funny indeed. Winks laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks.

But Mister Grim didn't try to cane him that time. He told him to go and stand in the corner—the right way up.

So Chinky stood in the corner the right way up, turning every now and then to grin at the others. Mister Grim began firing questions at the class. "Hands up those who know why brownies have long beards. Hands up those who know the magic word for 'disappear.' Hands up those who know why green smoke always comes out of chimneys of witches' houses. Hands up..."

He didn't even wait for anyone to answer, so the brownies just shot up their hands at each question and then put them down again and waited for the next. Peter and Mollie thought it was the silliest class they had ever attended!



"And now— can anyone ask me a question I can't answer?" said Mister Grim. "Aha! It would take a clever brownie to do that! Be careful—be—cause if I can answer it, you'll have to come up and be punished. Now, who will ask me a question I can't answer?"

The brownies had all been caught by this trick before, so nobody put up his hand.

Mister Grim pounced on poor Winks. "You, brownie! Can't you think of a question?"

"Yes, sir," said Winks at once. "I'd like to know why gooseberries wear whiskers. Do they belong to the brownie family?"

Everybody roared at this ridiculous question. Except Mister Grim. He looked as grim as his name. He rapped with his stick on the desk.

"Come up here, Winks. I will not have you up—setting the class like this with your silly remarks." And Winks went up, grinning. He got three strokes of the wand, but it didn't hurt him, of course, as he had still got the spell in his hands that prevented the stick from hurting him.

"I've got a question; I've got a question!" suddenly called out Chinky, seeing a chance to get his wand.

"What is it?" said Mister Grim, frowning.

"Mister Grim, why do horses wear hooves instead of feet?" cried Chinky.

"Come up here," said Mister Grim, sternly.

"That's another silly question."

Chinky went. "Hold out your hand," said Mis-ter Grim. Chinky held it out. Mister Grim brought down the wand as hard as he could—but, dear me, he missed Chinky's hand altogether. The wand simply slipped to one side and didn't touch Chinky's hand at all.

Mister Grim tried again—and again—and again — but each time the wand slid away from Chinky's outstretched hand and hit the desk instead. It was very puzzling indeed for Mister Grim.

The brownies were all laughing. So were Peter and Mollie. Mister Grim's face was so comical to watch as he tried to hit Chinky's hand and couldn't.

"I shall break this stick in two!" he cried suddenly in a rage.

That gave Chinky a shock. "No," he shouted. "No, you mustn't do that! You mustn't!"

"Why not?" said Mister Grim, and he put both hands on the wand as if to break it.

Peter, Mollie and Chinky watched in despair, waiting for the crack.

But the wand wasn't going to let itself be broken! It slid out of Mister Grim's big hands and shot over to Chinky, who caught it as it came.

"Ha!" Shouted Chinky in delight. "I've got it again—my lovely wand—I've got it!"

"What! Is it a wand?" cried Mister Grim in astonishment. "I didn't know that. Give it back to me!"

He snatched at it, but Chinky was skipping down the room, waving it.

"I'll give you all a half-holiday! Yes, I will! See my wand waving to give you all a half-holiday! Go into the garden and play, all of you!"

The brownies didn't wait. They rushed out of the room at top speed, shouting and laughing. Soon only Peter, Mollie and Chinky were left with Mis-ter Grim. Winks was peeping round the door.

"How DARE you treat me like this!" shouted Mister Grim, marching towards Chinky. "I'll —"

"Go back, go back!" chanted Chinky, and waved his wand at Mister Grim, whose feet at once took him six steps backwards, much to his surprise. "You see, I've got magic in my wand," cried the pixie. "Aha! I may have powerful magic, Mister Grim, so be careful!"

"Come on, Chinky," whispered Peter. "Let's go and find the Wishing-Chair and fly off."

"But I want my doll Rosebud before we go," said Mollie. "And have you forgotten your engine and all the other toys, Peter? We must take those with us. Mister Grim, give us our toys!"

"Certainly not," said Mister Grim, and he shook a large key at them. "See this key? It's the key of the storeroom, which I've locked. You can't get your toys and you never shall!"

"We'll see about that," said Chinky. "We'll just see about that, Mister Grim!"

"But it's pouring with rain," said Peter, looking in at the door as he struggled to put down the big

umbrella. "We shall get soaked if we go miles through this rain."

"We'll take the umbrella," said Mollie. "It will cover all three of us easily."

"Four of us," said Winks, and he popped out of the cupboard and grinned at them. "I've come back for a day or two. I hid in the cupboard in case it was your mother or somebody coming."

"Oh, Winks, I'm so glad you're coming, too," said Mollie. "Can we go now, this very minute, Chinky?"

"I don't see why not," said Chinky. "Don't put down that umbrella, Peter; we'll come now and you can hold it over us as we fly."

So very soon all four were sitting in the Wish-ing-Chair, flying through the rain. Peter held the big umbrella over them, and although their legs got a bit wet, the rest of them was quite dry.

"It's quite a long journey, so I hope the chair will fly fast," said Chinky. "It will be a bit dull because the rain clouds stop us from seeing anything."

The chair suddenly began to rise high. It went right through the purple-grey clouds, higher and higher and higher—and then at last it was through the very last of them, and the children found themselves far above the topmost clouds, full in the blazing sun!

"Well," said Peter, trying to shut the umbrella, "what a brainy idea of yours, Wishing-Chair. Now we shall soon be warm and dry again. Blow this umbrella! I simply can't shut it."

So it had to remain open; and, as it happened, it was a very good thing it did, because Winks tried to catch a swallow going past at sixty miles an hour, and overbalanced out of the chair! He clutched at the umbrella as he fell and down he went, with the umbrella acting just like a parachute!

"Very clever of you, Winks!" said Chinky, as the chair swooped down and hovered by the umbrella for Winks to climb on to the seat again. "I hope you only do this sort of thing when there's an open umbrella to catch hold of!"

Winks looked rather pale. He sat panting on the seat. "I got a fright," he said. "I really did."

"Well, don't be frightened if you do fall," said Mollie. "Do what Chinky did when he once fell! He changed himself into a large snow-flake and fell gently to earth! He hadn't even a bruise when he changed back to himself again."

"Very clever. I must remember that," said Winks. "I say, doesn't this Wishing-Chair fly fast?"

It certainly did. It flew even faster than the swallows, and passed over miles and miles of country, which lay spread out like a coloured map far below. The children caught glimpses of it through openings in the clouds.

"What's your cousin Pipkin like?" asked Mollie.

"Well, he was a bit plump," said Chinky. "And

I expect he's plumper still now that he lives in the Land of Goodies. He's very generous and kind, though he's rather

greedy, too. He could easily beat Mollie at eating ice-creams.'

"Could he really?" said Mollie. "Oh, look, Chinky—we're going downwards. Are we there?"

They went down and down through layers of clouds. When they came below them they found that the rain had stopped. Chinky peered down.

"Yes—we're there. Now just remember this, all of you—you can eat whatever is growing on bushes, hedges, or trees, but you mustn't eat anybody's house."

Peter and Mollie stared at him in wonder. "Eat anybody's house! Are the houses made of eatable things, then?"

"Good gracious, yes," said Chinky. "Everything is eatable in the Land of Goodies—even the chimneys! They are usually made of marzipan."

The Wishing-Chair landed on the ground. The children jumped off quickly, anxious to see this wonderful land. They looked around.

Mollie's eyes grew wide. "Look—look, Peter—there's a bush growing currant buns. It is really. And look, there's a hedge with a funny-looking fruit—it's bars of chocolate!"

"And look at that house!" cried Peter. "It's all decorated with icing sugar— isn't it pretty? And it's got little silver balls here and there in its walls— and all down its front door too."

"Look at these funny flowers in the grass!" cried

Mollie. "I do believe they are jam tarts! Chinky, can I pick one?"

"Pick a whole bunch if you like," said Chinky. "They're growing wild."

Mollie picked two. "One's got a yellow middle—It's lemon curd—and the other's got a red middle—it's raspberry jam," she said, tasting them.

"Better come and find my cousin Pipkin," said Chinky. "We're not supposed to come to the Land of Goodies except by invitation, so we'd better find him, so that he can say we are his guests. We don't want to be turned out before we've picked a nice bunch of jam tarts, currant buns and chocolate biscuits!"

Chinky asked a passer-by where his cousin Pipkin lived. Luckily, it was very near. They hurried along till they came to a kind of bungalow. It was round and its roof was quite flat.

"Why, it's built the shape of a cake!" cried Mollie. "And look, it's got cherries sticking out of the walls—and aren't those nuts on the roof—sticking up like they do in some cakes? Oh, Chinky, I believe your cousin lives in a cake-house!"

"Well, he won't need to do much shopping then," said Chinky, with a grin. "He can just stay indoors and nibble at his walls!"

They went in at a gate that looked as if it were made of barley sugar. Chinky knocked at the door. It was opened by a very, very fat pixie indeed! He fell on Chinky in delight, almost knocked him over, and kissed him soundly on his cheek.

"Cousin Chinky! You've come to see me after all!" he cried. "And who are these nice people with you?"

"Mollie and Peter and Winks," said Chinky.

"Glad to meet you," said Pipkin. "Now—how would you like to see my Biscuit Tree to begin with? And after that we'll go a nice hungry walk, and see what we can find!"

XVI

## AN AFTERNOON WITH COUSIN PIPKIN

Pipkin took them to see his Biscuit Tree. This was really marvellous. It had buds that opened out into brown biscuits—chocolate ones! There they hung on the tree, looking most delicious.

"Pick as many as you like," said Pipkin, generously. "It goes on flowering for months."

"Aren't you lucky to have a Chocolate Biscuit Tree," said Pipkin. "The chocolate melts then, you know. It was most annoying the other afternoon. It was very hot and I sat down under my Biscuit Tree for shade—and I fell asleep. The sun melted the chocolate on the biscuits and it all dripped over me, from top to bottom. I was sight when I got up!"

Everyone laughed. They ate a lot of the biscuits and then Mollie remembered something else.

"You said in your letter to Chinky that you had a jelly plant," said Mollie. "Could we see that, too?"

Pipkin led the way round to his front door. Then the children saw something they had not noticed when they had first arrived. A climbing plant trailed over the door. It had curious big, flat flowers, shaped like white plates.



"The middle of the white flowers is full of coloured jelly!" cried Mollie. "Gracious—you want to walk about with spoons and forks hanging at your belt in this land!"

"Well, we do, usually," said Pipkin, "I'll get you a spoon each—then you can taste the jelly in my jellypaint."

It was really lovely jelly. "I should like to eat two or three," said Mollie, "but I do so want to leave room for something else. Can we go for a walk now, Pipkin?"

"Certainly," said Pipkin. So off they went, each carrying a spoon. It was a most exciting walk. They picked bunches of boiled sweets growing on a hedge like grapes, they came to a stream that ran ginger-beer instead of water and they actually found meat-pies growing on a bush.

The ginger-beer was lovely, but as they had no glasses they had to lie down and lap like dogs. "I should have remembered to bring one or two enamel mugs," said Pipkin. "We shall pass a lemonade stream soon."

"Is any ice-cream growing anywhere?" asked Mollie longingly.

"Oh, yes," said Pipkin. "But you'll have to go down into the cool valley for that. It's too hot here in the sun—the ice-cream melts as soon as it comes into flower."

"Where's the valley?" said Mollie. "Oh—down there. I'm going there, then."

Mollie found a sturdy-stemmed plant with flat green leaves, in the middle of which grew pink, brown or yellow buds, shaped like cornets.

"Ice-creams!" cried Mollie, and picked one. "Oooh! This is a vanilla one. I shall pick a pink flower next and that will be strawberry."

"I've got a chocolate ice," said Peter.

Pipkin and Chinky ate as many as the others. Chinky could quite well see why his cousin had grown so fat. Anyone would, in the Land of Good—ies. He felt rather fat himself!

"Now let's go to the village," said Pipkin. "I'm sure you'd all like to see the food in the shops there, really delicious."

"Is there tomato soup?" asked Peter; it was his very favourite soup.

"I'll take you to the soup shop," said Pipkin, and he did. It was a most exciting shop. It had a row of taps in it, all marked with names—such as tomato, potato, chicken, onion, pea—and you chose which you wanted to turn, and out came soup—tomato, chicken, or whatever you wanted!

"There isn't the soup I like best," said Winks, sadly. "I like pepper soup."

"You don't!" said Chinky. "It would be terri- bly terribly hot."

"Well, I like it—and there isn't any," said Winks.

"There's a tap over there without any name," said Pipkin. "It will produce whatever soup you want that isn't here."

He took a soup-plate and went to the tap with—out a name. "Pepper soup," he said, and a stream of hot soup came out, red in colour.

"There you are, red pepper soup," he said, and handed it to Winks. "Now we'll see if it really is your favourite soup or not!"

"Course it is!" said Winks, and took a large spoonful. But, oh dear, oh dear, how he choked and how he spluttered! He had to be banged on the back, and had to be given a drink of cold wa-ter.

"It serves you right for saying what isn't true," Mollie said to Winks. "You didn't like pepper soup, so you shouldn't have asked for any."

"I was just being funny, said poor Winks.

"Well, we thought it was all very funny, especially when you took that spoonful," said Peter. "Now—can I get you a little mustard soup, Winks?"

But Winks had had enough of soups. "Let's leave this soup shop," he said. "What's in the next one?"

The next one was a baker's shop. There were iced cakes of all shapes and colours set in rows upon rows. How delicious they looked!

"Wouldn't you each like to take one home with you?" said Pipkin. "You don't have to pay for them, you know."

That was one of the nice things about the Land of Goodies. Nobody paid anyone anything. Mollie looked at the cakes. There was a blue one there, with yellow trimmings of icing sugar. Mollie had never seen a blue cake before.

"Can I have this one, do you think?" she said.

The baker looked at her. He was as plump as Pipkin and had a little wife as plump as himself. Their dark eyes looked like currants in their round little faces.

"Yes, you can have that," said the baker. "What is your name, please?"

"Mollie," said Mollie. "Why do you want to know?"

"Well, it's to be your cake, isn't it?" said the baker. He dabbed the cake and suddenly in the

very middle of the icing came the letters MOLLIE—Mollie! Now it really was Mollie's cake.

Peter had one with his name, and Pipkin had another. Chinky chose a pretty pink cake and his name came up in white icing sugar.

Wink's name came up spelt wrongly. The letters were WINXS, and Peter pointed out that that was not the right way to spell his name. Winks hadn't noticed. He was a very bad speller. But Peter noticed it, and Winks chose another cake on which his name appeared spelt rightly. It was all very queer indeed.

"Well, Pipkin, thank you very much for a most interesting and delicious afternoon," said Chinky, when they each had a cake to take home. "How I'm going to eat this cake I really don't know. Actually I don't feel as if I could ever eat anything again."

They came to Pipkin's house and said good-bye to him. Then they went off to find their Wishing- Chair. Winks lagged behind, nibbling his cake. The others hurried on. They knew exactly where they had left the chair.

Suddenly they heard Chinky give a loud cry of anger. "Look! Winks is doing JUST what I said nobody was to do! He's breaking off bits of gate—posts to chew—and look, he's taken a bit of win—dow-sill—it's made of gingerbread! And now he's throwing currant buns at that marzipan chimney to try to break it off!"

So he was! Poor Winks—he simply couldn't change from a bad brownie to a good one all at once. He was tired of being good and now he was being thoroughly naughty.

Crash! Down came the Chimney, and Winks ran to it to break off bits of marzipan. And round the corner came two policemen! They had heard the crash and come to see what it was. When they saw Winks they blew their whistles loudly and ran up to him.

"Well—he's really got himself into trouble again now," said Chinky. "Isn't he silly?"

Winks was struggling hard with the two police—men. He called out to Chinky. "Save me, Chinky, save me! Mollie, Peter, come and help!"

"Oho!" said the bigger policeman of the two. "Are they your friends? We'll catch them, too! No doubt they are as bad as you."

"Quick! We must get in the Wishing-Chair and go!" said Chinky. "Winks will always get into trouble wherever he goes—but there's no need for us to as well. Where's the Wishing-Chair?"

They found it where they had left it, hidden well away under a bush. They climbed in, with Chinky at the back, just as the big policeman came pound-ing up.

"Hey! What's all this?" he called. "Is that chair yours?"

"YES!" shouted Chinky. "It is. Home, chair, home. Good-bye, Winks. Say you're sorry for what you've done and maybe you'll be set free."

Off went the chair, high into the air, leaving the big policeman gaping in surprise. He had never seen a Wishing-Chair before. They were soon out of sight.

That night, when the three of them were play-ing Snap in the playroom, the door opened cau-tiously—and who should come in but Winks! The others exclaimed in surprise.

"Winks! you didn't get put into prison, then?"

"Yes," said Winks. "But the walls were made of chocolate cake—so I just ate my way through and got out easily. But, oh dear—I feel as if I never want to taste chocolate cake again! What is for supper?"

"CHOCOLATE CAKE," roared everyone in de-light, and Winks fled out into the night. No—he simply could not face chocolate cake again.

XVII

## A MOST ALARMING TALE

For a week Chinky didn't see the children because they had gone to the seaside. They gave him all kinds of advice before they went.

"Now you see that you keep an eye on the Wish-ing-Chair for us, won't you?" said Peter. "And if it grows its wings, don't you go on adventures with- out us. And DON'T let Winks have the chair at all. I like Winks, and he's good fun, but he's dread-fully naughty. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he isn't sent back to Mister Grim's school again some day."

"I know. I caught him practising magic with my wand last night," said Chinky. "He was trying to change the teapot into a rabbit. Silly thing to do."

"Yes,very," said Mollie. "You can't pour tea out of a rabbit. Now you be sure to keep an eye on Winks, Chinky."

"And don't sleep with the door or window open at night, in case the chair grows its wings when you're asleep and flies off by itself," said Peter.

"Oh dear—it's so hot now," said poor Chinky. "It's dreadful to have to sleep with the doors and windows shut. I've been tying the chair to my leg, so that if it does try to fly off, it will tug at my leg and wake me. Isn't that all right? I thought it was a very good idea."

"Yes, it is," said Peter. "Well, so long as you remember to tie your leg and the chair's leg to-gether at night, you can sleep with the door and windows open."

"But watch that nobody slips in to steal the Chair," said Mollie.

Chinky began to look very worried. "I'm be-ginning to feel you'd better not go away," he said. "Anyway, don't I always look after the chair at night for you? Nothing has ever happened to it

yet!"

The others laughed. "We're being fussy, aren't we!" they said. "Good-bye, Chinky, dear. A week will soon go, so don't be too lonely. I expect Winks will be popping in and out to see you."

The children had a lovely week at the seaside and came back browner than ever. As soon as Mother would let them they rushed down to the playroom to see Chinky.

He wasn't there, so they looked for a note. There wasn't one. "Well, he's probably just gone out for a few minutes to see a friend," said Peter. "We'll hang up the seaweed we've brought, and tidy up the room."

So they spent a happy ten minutes nailing up the long fronds of seaweed they had brought back, and tidying up their playroom, which seemed to have got very untidy whilst they had been away.

"It's funny Chinky hasn't kept it tidier than this," said Mollie, pulling the rugs straight, and putting a chair upright.

Then she suddenly gave a cry. "Peter! where's the Wishing-Chair? It isn't here!"

Peter looked round, startled. "Well ! Fancy us not noticing that as soon as we came in! Where is it?"

"I suppose Chinky's gone off in it," said Mollie. "He might have left a note! I suppose he's at his mother's."

"He'll soon be back then," said Peter, going to the door and looking out. "He knew this was the

day we were coming home."



But Chinky didn't come, and by the time tea-time came the children felt rather worried. Surely Chinky would have been back to tea on the day they came home? He always liked to spend every minute with them that he could, especially now that they had to go to boarding-school and leave him for months at a time. They had brought their tea down to the playroom. They were sitting having it, rather solemnly, when a small mischievous face looked round the door. It was Winks.

"Hallo!" he said, but he didn't smile. He looked very grave and walked in quietly.

"Where's Chinky?" asked Mollie at once.

"And where's the Wishing-Chair?" said Peter.

"An awful thing happened two nights ago," said Winks in dismay. "For goodness' sake tell us," said Mollie.

"Well," said Winks, "I was staying here with Chinky that night. I was to sleep on that rug on the floor with a cushion, and Chinky was to sleep on the sofa as usual. When we were tired we got ready for bed."

"Go on," said Peter, impatiently. "I want to know what's happened to Chinky."

"I went to sleep," said Winks, "and I suppose Chinky did, too. I suddenly woke up to hear a terrible noise going on— Chinky shouting and yelling, and furniture being upset and goodness knows what. I put on the light, and what do you think had happened? Why, you know Chinky always ties a rope from the chair to his foot, don't you— well, the chair grew its wings that night and we didn't wake—so it tried to fly out of the door all by itself, and—"

"The rope pulled on Chinky's foot and woke him!" said Peter.

"Yes, the chair pulled him right off the sofa," said Winks. "He must have landed with an awful bump on the floor, and I suppose he thought some-one had pulled him off and there was an enemy attacking him—so he was fighting the furniture and the rugs and shouting and yelling—and all the time the chair was tugging at his foot, trying to fly off!"

"Gracious!" said Mollie. "What happened in the end?"

"Well, when I put the light on I saw the chair struggling to get out of the door, and it was drag-ning Chinky along," said Winks. "I ran to stop the chair, but it rose into the air, dragged poor Chinky out into the garden, and flew up into the sky!"

"What about Chinky?" asked Mollie in a trem-bling voice.

"Oh, Mollie—poor, poor Chinky had to go, too, hanging upside down by one foot," said Winks blinking away tears. "I couldn't do anything about it, though I did try to catch hold of Chinky. But he was too high up by that time."

"This is awfiil," said Mollie. "Whatever are we to do? Has the chair gone to his mother's do you think?"

"No. I thought of that," said Winks. "I went next day to see, but Chinky's mother said she hadn't seen either Chinky or the chair. She's very worried."

"But why didn't the chair go to Chinky's mother?" wondered Peter. "Chinky would have been sure to yell out to it to go there."

"Well, I think the chair was frightened," said Winks. "It didn't know it had got Chinky by the foot, you see. It couldn't

understand all the yell-ing and struggling. It just shot off into the night, terrified."

"This is awfully bad news," said Mollie. "Both Chinky and the chair gone. And we don't know where. How can we find out?"

"I don't know," said Winks, who looked very tired. "I've been all over the place, asking and asking."

"Poor Winks," said Mollie. "You do look very tired. I suppose you've been worried to death about Chinky."

"Yes, I have," said Winks. "You see, I've been teasing him rather a lot -and I hid his wand and made him cross—and I broke a cup—and now I feel awfully sorry I was such a nuisance to him."

"You're really not very good at times, Winks," said Peter, sternly. "You ought to be careful, in case you get sent back to Mister Grim."

"Yes, I know," said Winks.

"The awful part is, even when we do find out, if ever we do, we haven't got the Wishing-Chair to fly off in to rescue him," said Peter, gloomily.

"Shall we go and ask Mr. Spells if he can help us?" said Mollie, suddenly. "He's awfully clever. He might think of some way of finding out where Chinky's gone."

"Yes—that's a very good idea!" said Peter. "You've heard about Mr. Spells, haven't you, Winks? Shall we go straight away now? I think I remember the way. We have to go to the Village of Pin first, and then take the bus, and then a boat."

"Yes," said Winks, cheering up. "I feel much better since I've talked to you."

They set off Down the garden they went, and through the gap in the hedge. Into the field, and across to find the dark patch of grass. It was still there. They all sat down in it and Mollie felt about for the little knob that set the magic going.

She found it and pressed it. Down shot the ring of grass, much too fast, and they all tumbled off in a heap below. "Gracious!" said Winks. "You might have warned me what was going to happen. I nearly died of fright when the earth fell away beneath me!"

"Come on," said Peter. "We have to go down this passage now—past all these doors. We really must find Mr. Spells as soon as possible."

They went on down the twisting passage, which was still lighted clearly by some light nobody could see. Winks wanted to stop and read the names on each door.

"'Dame Handy-Pandy'," he said. "Whoever is she? And this name says 'Mr. Piggie-Pie.' Oh, let's knock and see what he's like."

"Winks! Come along at once," said Mollie. "We're in a hurry!"

"Wait!" cried Winks. "Look at this door! Look at the name. Hey, Mollie, Peter—it says 'MRS. SPELLS!' Do you think she's anything to do with Mr. Spells? Let's find out."

And he banged hard at the little green door. ..Ratta—Tatta—Tat!" Oh, Winks—now what have you done?

## MR. SPELLS' MOTHER

Ratta—Tatta—Tat!

The echo of Winks' knocking at Mrs. Spells' door filled the underground passage and made the children jump. They turned round angrily.

"Winks! you shouldn't do that!"

"But I tell you, it says 'MRS. Spells' on this name-plate," began Winks. Just then the door opened and a black cat stood politely there, with a little apron round its tubby waist.

"If you've brought the papers, please don't knock so loudly again," said the cat, politely but crossly. "We were in the middle of a spell, and you made my mistress upset half of it. Now we've made a spell to make things small instead of big. It's most annoying." He slammed the door, almost hitting Winks' nose. The children came running up. Peter calling out breathlessly:

"I say! I do believe that was old Cinders, Mr. Spells' cat! He had such enormous green eyes—like green traffic lights shining out!"

"Was it really?" said Mollie. "Well, let's ask him if he is. Why, Mr. Spells might be here him—self! It would save us quite a long journey."

"Dare we knock again?" said Peter. "That cat was really very cross."

"I'm not afraid of a cross cat!" said Winks boldly, and he lifted the knocker and knocked again. He also found a bell and rang that, too.

"RATTA-TATTA-TAT! JINGLE-JANGLE- JING!"

Mr. Piggle-Pie's door flew open and a cross voice called, "Who's makeing that row? Just wait till I get dressed and I'll come and chase you!"

"That must have been Mr. Piggle-Pie," said Winks. "Bother! He's shut his door again. Now I shan't know what he's like!"

Then Mrs. Spell's door flew open, and the cat appeared again. But this time it behaved much more like a real cat. It spat at Winks and scratched him on the hand.

It was just about to shut the door again when Peter called out, "I say, aren't you Cinders?"

The cat stared at him. "Yes, I'm Cinders. Oh, I remember you. You're the boy who came with a girl to rescue Chinky—and I helped my master do a spell to wake him up. What are you doing here, hammering at our door?"

"Well, we were really on our way to see Mr.

Spells," said Peter. "But Winks here noticed the name 'Mrs. Spells' on the door, and he knocked. He thought she might be some relation to Mr. Spells."

"She is. She's his mother," said Cinders. "I came here to help the old lady with a new spell— the one you spoilt by making her jump. My mas-ter is coming to call for me in a few minutes."

"Oh, is he?" cried Peter joyfully. "Then do you think we might stay and see him—we do so badly want his help."

"Well, come in, then," said the cat. "I don't know about this brownie though—Winks, do you call him? Banging and

ringing like that. You wait till Mr. Piggle-Pie is dressed and comes after him. He'll get such a spanking."

"I don't want to stay out in the passage," said Winks, nervously. "I'll be very good and quiet and helpful if you'll let me come in."

"Who is it standing gossiping at the door?" suddenly called an annoyed voice. "Tell them either to go or to come in."

"You'd better come in and wait for Mr. Spells," said Cinders. So they all trooped in and Cinders shut the door. Winks was quite glad to be out of the passage, away from a possibly furious Mr. Piggle-Pie.

The cat led them into a remarkably big room, with three windows. The children were so astonished to see what the windows looked out on that they quite forgot their manners for the moment, and didn't greet the bent old lady who sat in a chair in the middle of the room.

One window looked out on the sea! Yes, the sea, as blue as could be! Another looked out on a sunny hillside. The third looked out on an ordinary backyard, where washing was blowing in the wind. Most extraordinary.

"Well!" said rather a peevish voice, "have the children of to-day no manners at all? Can't you even say how do you do to an old lady?"

"Oh, dear," said Mollie, ashamed of herself. "Please, Mrs. Spells, I'm so sorry—do forgive us—but it did seem so extraordinary seeing three windows like this—in an underground room—and one looking out on the sea, too. Why, I thought the sea was miles and miles away!"

"Things aren't always what they seem," said Mrs. Spells. "What is miles away for you, may be quite near for me. Now, what was all this noise about at my front door? When I was younger I would have turned you all into pattering mice and given you to Cinders, for making a noise of that sort in a respectable place like this!"

"Madam," said the cat, seeing that the old lady was working herself up into a temper, "Madam, these children know Mr. Spells, your son."

The old lady beamed at once. "Oh, do you know my son? Why didn't you tell me that at once? Cinders, some strawberryade, please, with straw→berry ice, and some strawberry biscuits."

This sounded exciting—and when it came, beautifully arranged on a large silver tray by Cin→ders, it was just as exciting as it sounded!

It was a pink drink made of strawberry juice. In it were pieces of ice shaped like strawberries, and the biscuit had tiny sugar strawberries in the middle!

"This is lovely," said Peter. "Thank you very much."

There came the sound of a key in the door. "Ah—my son, Mr. Spells!" said Mrs. Spells. "Here he is!"

And there he was again, just the same as be→fore, tall and commanding, but this time dressed in a long green cloak that shimmered like water. He looked very surprised indeed to see the visi→tors.

"Why—I've seen you before!" he said to the children. "How are you? Quite well, I hope. And let me see—have I seen this brownie before? Yes—I have. Aren't you the bad fellow who



turned all his grandmother's pigs blue? Isn't your name Winks?"

"Yes, Mr. Spells, Sir," said Winks.

"I hope you got spanked for that," said Mr. Spells. "I had a terrible job turning the pigs back to their right colour again. I believe they've still got blue tails."

Winks wished the floor would open and swallow him up, but it didn't. Mr. Spells turned to Peter.

"Well, have you come visiting my dear old mother?" he said.

Peter explained how it was they were in his mother's room. Then he told the enchanter about poor Chinky and the chair.

"Good gracious!" said Mr. Spells. "We must certainly find out where that chair has gone. If it falls into the hands of some rogue he can use it for all kinds of wrong purposes. And Chinky, too— what a silly thing to do, to tie his foot to the chair! Why didn't he tie the chair to the door-handle, or something like that?"

"We didn't think of that," said Peter. "Can you help us to find out where the chair is, and Chinky, too, Mr. Spells?"

"Of course," said Mr. Spells. "Now, let me think for a moment. This happened at night, you say— and the chair, as usual, flew up into the sky?"

"Yes," said everyone.

"Well, then—who was about that night in the sky, who might possibly have seen the chair and Chinky?" said Mr. Spells

thoughtfully.

"Hoot, the owl," said the old lady at once.

"Quite right Mother," said Mr. Spells.

"Splendid idea. We'll call Hoot, the owl, and see if he knows anything about this. He's a very wise and observant bird, you know," he said, turning to the children. "Never misses anything that goes on at night."

"Shall we go and ask him if he knows anything, then?" said Mollie. "Where does he live?"

"Oh, we'll get him here," said Mr. Spells.

"That's the easiest way. I'll go and call him."

He went to the windows that looked out on the sunny hillside. He clapped his hands three times and muttered a word so magic that Winks trembled in his shoes. And a very curious thing happened. The sunny hillside went dark—as dark as night—and behind the trees shone a little moon! It was all very peculiar, especially as the sun still shone out in the backyard and on the sea that could be seen from the other windows!

"I must make it dark, or the owl won't come," explained Mr. Spells. "Now I'll call him."

He put his hand up to his mouth, placed his thumbs carefully together, and blew gently—and to the children's delight and surprise, the hoot of an owl came from his closed hands. "Ooo-ooo- oooo-oooh! Ooo-ooo-oo!"

An answering hoot came from outside the window. A dark shadow passed across the room. Then a big owl flew silently

down and perched on Mr. Spells' shoulder. He caressed the big-eyed creature, whilst Cinders looked on rather jealously.

"Hoot," said Mr. Spells. "Listen carefully. Two nights ago a Wishing-Chair flew off into the sky, and hanging to it by a rope tied to his foot was a pixie called Chinky. Did you see anything of this?"

"Ooooooooo-ooo-ooo! Ooooooooo-oo! Ooooh! Oooooo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oooooooooh!" answered the owl, hooting softly into Mr. Spells' ear.

"Thank you, Hoot," said Mr. Spells, looking grave. "You may go."

The owl flew off silently. Mr. Spells waited a moment and then muttered another magic word. The moonlit hillside grew lighter and lighter—and, hey presto, it was the sun behind the trees now and not the moon—daylight was everywhere!

"What did the owl tell you?" asked Peter.

"Oh—I forgot you couldn't understand," said Mr. Spells. "Well, he saw the chair—and Chinky, too, dangling by his foot. He followed them out of curiosity—and he says they flew near the Wandering Castle, where Giant Twisty lives, and the giant must have seen them and captured them. He saw no more of them after that."

This was very bad news indeed. "Oh, dear— whatever are we going to do, then?" said Peter at last. "Poor little Chinky!"

"I must help you," said Mr. Spells. "I can't let Twisty own that chair. Sit down. We must think of a plan!"

## XIX

### AWAY ON ANOTHER ADVENTURE

"We can't do anything this evening," said Mr. Spells. "That's quite certain. Anyway, the first thing to do is to find out where the Wandering Castle is."

"Don't you know?" said Mollie, in surprise, as she thought Mr. Spells knew everthing.

"I know where it was last year, and the year before, and even last month," said Mr. Spells, "but I don't know where it is now. It may have wandered anywhere."

"Oh—does it move about?" asked Peter in amazement.

"Good gracious, yes! It's always wandering," said the enchanter. "One day it may be here, the next it's somewhere else. Giant Twisty finds that very useful because he's always getting into trouble because of his bad ways, and it's very convenient to have a castle that can slip away in the night."

"It's going to be very difficult to find, isn't it?" said Mollie. "I mean, even if we find out where it is now, it may not be there when we get there."

"True. But there's a chance it may rest in the same place for some weeks," said Mr. Spells. "Winks, what are you doing?"

Winks jumped. "Just—just stirring this stuff in the pot," he said.

"Look at you hands!" thundered Mr. Spells. "You've been dipping them in—and now see what you've done! Meddlesome little brownie!"

Winks looked at his hands. Oh, dear, they were bright blue! He stared at them in horror.

"Now you know what your grandmother's pigs must have felt like when you turned them blue," said the enchanter. "Well, keep your blue hands. Every time you look at them you can say to your-self, 'I must not meddle. I must not meddle.'"

Winks put his hands into his pockets, looking very doleful.

"Well, children," said Mr. Spells, "I think you'd better leave things to me to-night. I'll do my best to find out where the Wandering Castle happens to be at the moment and we will make a good plan to get back the chair and Chinky. Can you come along early to-morrow morning?"

"Yes. We'll ask Mother to let us go out for the day," said Peter. "Come on, Mollie. Thank you, Mr. Spells, for your help. Good-bye, Mrs. Spells. Good-bye, Cinders."

"You can go out of this door if you like," said the enchanter, and the children suddenly saw a small silver door gleaming in the wall near the window that looked out on the hillside. They were sure it hadn't been there before. Cinders opened it for them.

He bowed politely to the children, but dug a claw into Winks, who yelled and shot outside in a hurry. Winks shook a bright blue fist at the cat.

"Where are we?" said Peter, as they walked down the hillside, now filling with shadows as the sun sank low. "Goodness—why, there's our gar-den!"

So it was, just nearby. How very extraordinary. "If only people knew how near their gardens are to curious and

wonderful places, how surprised they would be!" said Mollie, walking in at their side-gate, and going to the playroom.

"Well, we can take that short cut to-morrow. I do wonder how it is that the sea is outside that other window. I just simply can't understand that!"

They said good-bye to Winks, who had tried in vain to wash the blue off his hands under the gar- den-tap. Then off they went to ask their mother if they could have the whole day to themselves to-morrow. She said, Yes, of course they could! It would do them good to go into the country in the lovely summer weather they were having now.

"Well, I don't know what Mother would say if she knew we were going to hunt for Giant Twisty in his Wandering Castle!" said Peter. "I suppose she just wouldn't believe it."

The next day the children had breakfast very early indeed, and then set off down the garden to collect Winks. His hands were still as blue as ever, so he had put on a pair of gloves.

"Oh—you've borrowed them from my biggest doll, Winks," said Mollie. "You might have asked permission first. I should have said, 'No, certainly you can't have them.'"

"Yes. I felt sure you wouldn't let me," said Winks. "That's why I didn't ask you. I'll take great care of them, Mollie, I really will. Your doll doesn't mind a bit."

They went out of the garden gate and looked round. Where was that short cut now? They couldn't find it at all! But Winks spotted it.

"I've better eyes for strange things than you have," he said. "I can see a little shining path in the grass that you can't see. Follow me."

"Well, you must be right," said Peter, as Winks led them straight over the grass to the same trees on the same sunny hillside as they had seen the day before. "And there's the little silver door!"

Cinders opened it as they came near. Winks shot in so quickly that he hadn't time to scratch the brownie, though he did try!

Mr. Spells was there, surrounded by papers and old books of all kinds. "My mother is still asleep in bed," he said. "I'm glad you're early. We can start off straight away."

"Oh—have you found out where the Wander-ing Castle is?" asked Mollie, in delight. Did your magic books tell you?"

"They helped," said Mr. Spells. "And Cinders and I did a little Find-Out Spell we know. Wander-ing Castle is now on the island belonging to Giant Small-One, Twisty's brother."

"Giant Small-One—that's a funny name," said Mollie.

"Not really," said Mr. Spells. "He's small for a giant, that's all. Well, we'd better start."

"But how can we get to an island?" said Peter.

"We haven't a Wishing-Chair to fly over the sea!"

"That doesn't matter," said Mr. Spells. "Cin-ders has been getting my ship ready."

He pointed to the window that so surprisingly looked out on the sea. The children stared in won-der and delight. A most beautiful ship rocked gen-tly on the calm blue sea, a picture of loveliness with its big, white sails. Mollie cried out in joy. "Oh—what a beauty! And it's called The MollieV

"Just a little compliment to you," said Mr. Spells, smiling. "Also it's supposed to be lucky to sail in a ship bearing one of the passengers' names. Well—shall we set off? The wind is just right."

Cinders opened the window. Just outside was a stone ledge, with steps leading down to a tiny jetty. Cinders went first and helped Mollie down.

They all stepped aboard the beautiful white-sailed ship. Mr. Spells took the tiller.

"Blow, wind, blow.

And on we will go

Over the waters blue," he sang, and the white ship leapt forward like a bird.

"Is that a spell you sang?" said Mollie.

"Oh, no—just a little song" said Mr. Spells. And he began to sing again, whilst the ship sailed lightly over the blue waters. The children and Winks enjoyed it very much. Mollie trailed her hand in the water.

"Did we bring any food?" asked Mollie, suddenly. "I'm hungry!"

"No," said Mr. Spells, and everyone at once looked rather gloomy. "Enchanters don't need to," he went on. "I always carry a spell in my pocket that I use when I need any food."

Soon they were all eating and drinking, as the ship sped on and on.



For two hours the ship sailed on—then Cinders gave a shout. "Land ahoy! It's the island, Mr. Spells, sir."

"Aha!" said the enchanter. "Now we must be a bit careful." They all looked hard at the island that was rapidly coming nearer as the ship sped over the water. It didn't look very big. It was crowded with tall buildings, some of them looking like palaces, some like castles.

"Which is the Wandering Castle, I wonder?" said Mollie.

"Can't possibly tell," said Mr. Spells. "Now here we go towards this little jetty. We'll land there. You'll have to watch out a bit, because several giants live here and you don't want to be trodden on like ants."

Mollie didn't like the sound of this much. She was determined to keep very close to Mr. Spells. Cinders was left with the ship, much to Winks' relief. They all set off up an extremely wide street.

"We shall be all right if we keep to the narrow pavements that run beside the walls of the building," said Mr. Spells, guiding them to one. "There are plenty of small folk living here, as well as giants."

So there were—pixies and brownies and goblins and elves—but there were also giants, and Mollie suddenly saw a most enormous foot, followed by another one, walking down the street! She shrank close to Mr. Spells.

When the giant came by the children tried to see up to the top of him, but he was too tall. "That's a large-sized giant," said Mr. Spells. "I know him

— nice fellow called Too-Big. Here's a smaller one."

It was exciting and extraordinary to see giants walking about. Mr. Spells guided them to a palace not quite so tall as some of the buildings.

"This is where Giant Small-One lives—the giant the island belongs to," he said. "Come along

— we will ask him whereabouts his brother's Wandering Castle is. Don't be afraid. I am much more powerful than he is and he knows it."

They went up a long, long flight of steps. At the top was a big open door, leading into a vast hall. At the end of the hall sat a giant—but he was such a small one that he wasn't more than twice the size of the enchanter himself!

"Advance, Mr. Spells, and pay your respects to Giant Small-One," boomed an enormous voice from somewhere.

And Mr. Spells boldly went forward. Now to find out what they all wanted to know!

XX

## WANDERING CASTLE AT LAST

Mr. Spells made a small bow. "Greetings, Giant Small-One," he said. "I see you have not yet found a spell to make you Tall-One instead of Small-One. I come to ask you a question. We want to find your brother, Giant Twisty. Is Wandering Castle on your

island?"

"I believe so," said the voice of Giant Small-One, rather a feeble voice for a giant. "Go to High Hill and you will see it

there. Why does Mr. Spells, grand enchanter, want my brother?"

"That is my own business," said Mr. Spells. The children thought he was very bold indeed to speak to a giant like that.

"Pray stay to a meal," said Small-One, and he clapped his big hands, making a noise like guns cracking. "I have few guests as important as you."

"Thank you, no," said Mr. Spells. "Our business is urgent. We will go."

He walked back to the children and Winks, and they made their way to the door. But it was shut! They couldn't open such a big door themselves, so they had to go all the way back to Small-One and ask for a servant to open the door.

It took a long time to find a servant, which was strange, considering how many there had been in the hall a few minutes before. "He is delaying us," said Mr. Spells angrily. "He wants to get a message to his brother, before we reach him, to warn him that we are on his track!"

At last a servant was found, the door was opened and they all trooped down the endless steps. They made their way down the street, came into a wide lane, lined with hedges as high as trees, and then found a sign-post that said "To High Hill."

"There's High Hill," said Peter, pointing across the fields to a very tall hill. "There are quite a lot of buildings on it. I wonder which is Wandering

Castle?"

They came to High Hill at last and toiled up it. They met a small pixie running down, and Mr. Spells hailed her.

"Hey, little pixie! Where's Wandering Castle?"

"Let me see, now—I saw it yesterday," said the little pixie.

"Yes, I remember now. It's in the Sil-ver Buttercup Field, sir."

"Silver Buttercups!" said Mollie, astonished. "I've never heard of those. I don't think I should like them. The golden ones are just right."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Spells, guiding them round a big house. "But some enchanters are very silly—always trying out novelties, you know. Well, here we are—here is Silver Buttercup Field."

So it was. Silvery buttercups nodded in a great shimmering carpet. "Beautiful, but washed-out looking," said Mr. Spells. "The thing is—where's Wandering Castle? It's certainly not here! It's wan-dered away again. Small-One got a message to his brother in time—whilst we were trying to get that door open. Well, where has it wandered to now?"

"Please, sir, I know!" said a small goblin, run-ning up. "It's gone to Loneliness! I don't know if you know that country, sir. It's over the sea to the east—a very, very lonely palce, where nobody ever goes if they can help it. It is going to hide itself there till you've given up looking for Twisty and his castle."

"How do you know all this?" demanded Mr. Spells.

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"Because I was lying resting in these butter- cups when a servant from Giant Small-One came running up to warn

Twisty that you were after him," said the goblin. "And I heard Twisty say where he was going."

"Right. Thank you very much," said Mr. Spells. "Come along, children—back to the ship. We must sail off to Loneliness at once. Twisty could easily hide himself in that strange, desolate land without anyone finding him for years."

"Oh, dear—we really must find him, because of Chinky," said Mollie. They went back to the ship. Cinders was so pleased to see them back so soon that he quite forgot to try and scratch Winks as he got on board.

They set off again, the wind filling the sails and making the ship fly like a bird. She rocked up and down lightly as she went, and the children began to feel very sleepy.

They fell asleep. Mr. Spells awoke them after a time. "Mollie! Peter! We're here. Wake up, both of you."

They sat up in the ship. It was moored to a small pier. Mollie looked out on the land of Loneliness. It was a gloomy, desolate place, with enormous trees growing in thick masses. "There are forests and forests of those," said Mr. Spells, looking as gloomy as Loneliness looked. "How we shall ever know where the Wandering Castle is, I can't imagine!"

They landed, and walked towards the nearest forest of trees. Just as they got there they heard a voice shouting furiously.

"No peace anywhere! None at all! I come here, where nobody ever goes—and what comes walk—ing almost on top of me but a castle! A CASTLE! Just when I thought I was going to sleep alone in peace!"

And out of the trees burst Chinky's cousin, Sleep-Alone! He was just as surprised to see the children and Winks and Mr. Spells as they were to see him.

"Sleep-Alone! Oh, Sleep-Alone, you're just about the only person who would come here!" cried Peter. "Where is that castle you've been complain—ing about? It's Giant Twisty's, and he's got Chinky a prisoner there."

"Good thing, too," grumbled Sleep-Alone. "Mischievous creature, always coming and dis—turbing me at night!"

"Listen, Sleep-Alone," said Mr. Spells. "If you

will lead us to that castle, we plan to rescue Chinky and the Wishing-Chair—and we will turn the wicked Twisty out of his castle. Then it will be empty, in the middle of the land of Loneliness. And you shall have it for your own! Think of being alone there, with no one to wake you at night, no one to bother you!"

Sleep-Alone listened to all this in delight.

What, have a large empty castle all to himself, with a thousand rooms to sleep in—lost in the middle of a forest in the land of Loneliness? Won—derful!

"I'll show you where it is," he said eagerly.

They followed him. He darted in and out of the trees, following no path that they could see -and then at last they saw Wandering Castle! It stood there, rocking a little in the wind, for it had no true foundations as other buildings have. It was tall and dark and gloomy—and it hadn't a single win—dow of any kind!

"There you are!" said Sleep-Alone. "A very fine castle, too—only one door—and no windows. Just the place for me!"

Mr. Spells looked at the castle in silence. One door—and no windows. A very difficult place to escape from if they got inside. But they must get inside. There was no doubt about that.

"Stay here by the door, Sleep-Alone," said Mr. Spells at last. "We're going in." He went up the broad steps to the great studded door.

The door opened. A giant stood there, a cross-eyed fellow, with a twisted smile on his face.

"Come in," he said. "So you've found me, have you? Well, I'm not going to deny that I've got the Wishing-Chair—yes, and Chinky, too—and now I'll have you as well."

To the children's surprise, Mr. Spells didn't run away. He stepped inside and the children and Winks went, too, all feeling rather scared. Twisty laughed.

"This is easier than I thought!" he said. "How are you going to get out again, Mr. Spells? There is now no door—and, as I dare say you have seen, there are no windows at all!"

The children turned and looked behind them. The door had vanished. They were indeed prisoners. But Mr. Spells didn't seem at all disturbed.

"Where is Chinky?" he said.

"Follow me," said Twisty, and he went down a long, dark passage and through a door. He crossed the room beyond the door, and came to another one. The door to this was locked and bolted. He opened it.

Inside was Chinky, sitting miserably in the Wishing-Chair! He leapt up in the greatest joy when he saw the others. Mollie ran to him and flung her arms round him.

"Chinky! You're safe! Oh, Chinky, we've come to rescue you!"

Peter slapped Chinky on the back and Winks pumped his hand up and down, yelling, "Chinky, good old Chinky!"

In the middle of all this there came the sound of the door being slammed and bolted. Then they

heard Twisty laughing loudly.

"Easy! Too easy for words! You can't get out, Mr. Spells, however powerful you are. This door has a Keep-Shut Spell in it that I bought from an old witch years ago. And it's the only way out! You can go free if you give me some spells I've wanted for years."

"You'll never get them from me, Twisty," called Mr. Spells. "Never!"

"Mr. Spells! You are going to get us out of here, aren't you?" begged Mollie.

"Sh! Don't get alarmed," said Mr. Spells. "I am going to do a spell on us all. Yes, and on the Wish-ing-Chair, too. Now, where's my chalk?"

He found a white chalk in his pocket and a blue one, too. He drew first a white circle and then a blue one inside it. He made the children, Chinky and Winks sit down in the middle of it.



Then he got inside the circle himself, and sat down in the Wishing-Chair.

"I'm going to say very magic words," he said. "Shut your eyes, please—and don't be surprised at whatever happens!"

XXI

## A VERY EXCITING TIME

The children, Chinky and Winks shut their eyes. Mr. Spells began to mutter some magic words under his breath—then he spoke some aloud and then he suddenly shouted three spell-words at the top

of his voice, making everyone jump violently.

There was a silence. Then Mr. Spells spoke in his ordinary voice. "You can open your eyes now. The spell is done."

They opened their eyes and looked round them in wonder. They were in the very biggest room they had ever seen in their lives. The floor stretched endlessly away from them. The walls seemed miles away. Not far from them was a colossal wooden pillar—or what looked like one. The ceiling seemed to have disappeared or else was so far away that they couldn't see it. Certainly there was no sky above them, so probably the ceiling was still there!

"What's that enormous wooden post?" said Peter in wonder. "It wasn't here just now."

"It's the leg of the table," said Mr. Spells surprisingly.

"What do you mean?" said Peter. "It's much too big for that—look, that's the wooden pillar I mean—over there. And where are the chalk circles gone?"

"We're still standing in the middle of them," said Mr. Spells with a laugh. "Do you mean to say you don't know what has happened?"

"No," said Peter. "I feel funny, you know—but except that we appear to be in quite a different place now I don't know what's happened."

"I do," said Chinky. "You've used a very powerful Go-Small spell. Mr. Spells, haven't you? Goodness, I was awfully afraid you weren't going to stop the spell soon enough—I thought we were

going to shrink to nothing. How big are we?"

"Smaller than mice," said Mr. Spells. "I wanted to make us small enough to creep under the door, you see."

"How clever of you!" said Mollie joyfully. "I

see what has happened now—why the ceiling seems so far away, and why that table-leg looks like a great pillar—and why we can't see the chalk circles—we'd have a walk a long way to get to them now!"

"Quite right," said Mr. Spells. "Now I think we'd better make a move, in case the giant comes back and guesses what I've done. I'm glad the spell went so well—sometimes a powerful spell like that makes loud noises, and I've known it to make lightning come round the circle."

"Gracious!" said Peter. "I wish it had. I'd have enjoyed our own private little storm!"

"Now the thing is—where's the door gone?" said Chinky. "We've gone so small that the room is simply enormous, and the wall where the door is seems miles away. We'd better begin walking right round the walls till we come to the door!"

But Mr. Spells knew where the door was. Carrying the Wishing-Chair, which had gone small, too, he led them for what seemed miles over the floor, and they at last come to where the door was fitted into the wall. A draught blew at them as they came near to the enormous door.

"That's the draught blowing under the bottom of the door," explained Mr. Spells. "Now—I'm going to squeeze under first to see that everything is safe. Be ready to follow me when you hear me call."

He disappeared under the door, bending himself double. Soon they heard his voice. "Yes— come along—It's all right."

One by one they squeezed under the door, and found themselves in what they supposed must be the room outside—but now, of course, it seemed a very vast dark place indeed. "Shall I make us our right size again—or shall I keep us small?" wondered Mr. Spells. "On the whole, I think I'll keep us small."

He led them across the room and down a passage making them all keep very close to the bottom of the wall. It was a very good thing he did, too because round the corner they heard the sound of tremendous footsteps that shook the floor and made it tremble—the giant coming along the passage!

In a trice Mr. Spells pulled them all into what appeared to be some kind of mouse-hole—it seemed as large as a cave to the children! They crouched there till the thundering

footsteps had gone by. Then out they went as fast as they could.

"I want to find the front door if I can," said Mr. Spells. "We can easily slip under that. I must be at the end of this passage."

But before they reached it a thunderous noise made them all jump nearly out of their skins.

BANG-BANG-THUD-RAT-TAT-TAT!

"What is it?" cried Mollie, and caught hold of Mr. Spells. "What can it be?"

Mr. Spells laughed. "I think I can guess what it is," he said. "It's Chinky's cousin, Sleep-Alone. He's got tired of waiting for the castle, and he's knocking at the door to see what's happened! Oh dear—now I don't know what will happen!"

Plenty happened. When the knocker banged again on the door, an answering roar came from inside the castle, and Twisty the giant came pounding along the passage in a fine temper.

"Who's that knocking at my door? How dare you make this noise?"

The door was swung open and a wind blew down the passage at once, almost blowing the five tiny people over. Sleep-Alone stood outside, a small figure compared with the giant, but seeming like a giant now to the tiny children!

"Quick!" said Mr. Spells, "they are going to have a quarrel. Now's our chance to escape out of the door—but keep away from their feet. We're so small that neither of them will notice us."

The children ran with Chinky and Winks out of the door, keeping well to the side. But they couldn't possibly go any further than the top step because the drop down to the second step seemed like a cliff to them!

"I'll have to take a chance now and change us back to our right size," said Mr. Spells. "Other—wise we'll have to stand on this top step and sooner or later be trampled on. Shut your eyes, please, take hands, and keep together. I haven't got time to draw chalk circles, so this spell will happen very quickly. As soon as you're the right size, run down the steps as quickly as ever you can, and go to that tree over there. I'll bring the Wishing-Chair, and we'll soon be off and away!"

"What about Sleep-Alone?" said Chinky. "We promised he could have the castle."

"He'll look after that all right," said Mr. Spells, with a laugh. "Sleep-Alone is bolder than I thought he was! Now—eyes shut, please, and hold hands hard."

They all obeyed. Mr. Spells said the words that undid the Go-Small spell, and allowed them to shoot up to their right size again - but, as he had said, it happened very suddenly indeed, and all five of them gasped, felt giddy and fell over.

"Quick—get up—he's seen us!" shouted Mr. Spells. He picked up the Wishing-Chair which had also gone back to its right size, and ran down the steps with it. Everyone followed.

Sleep-Alone and the giant had been having a real rough and tumble. The giant was stronger and bigger than Sleep-Alone—but Chinky's cousin had got in so many sly jabs and punches that the giant had completely lost his temper.

He lashed out at Sleep-Alone, who ducked but the blow just caught him on the top of his head. He stumbled—and that would have been the end of him if the giant hadn't, at that very moment, caught sight of the five prisoners tearing down his steps!

He was so tremendously astonished that he forgot all about Sleep-Alone and simply stood there, staring out of his saucer-like eyes!

Then, with a bellow, he was after them. "How did you escape?" he roared. "Come back—or I'll throw you all up to the moon!"

Mr. Spells put down the Wishing-Chair. He sat in it quickly and pulled Peter and Mollie on his knee. Winks and Chinky sat on the back. "Home, Chair," ordered Mr. Spells, and at once the obedient Wishing-Chair rose into the air.

The giant made at grab at it, but the chair dodged, and Mr. Spells hit the giant smartly on his outstretched hand. The giant yelped.

"Good-bye!" called Chinky, waving his hand.

Meanwhile what had happened to Sleep-Alone? Plenty! When he saw the giant rushing after the others, he stood and stared for a moment. Then he hopped into Wandering Castle and shut the door very quietly.

And when Twisty turned round to go back and finish his quarrel with Sleep-Alone, there was no castle there! It had gone on its wanderings again!

"Oh dear—I wish we could stay and see the giant looking for his castle," said Mollie. "What a shock he's having! His prisoners all escaping, the Wishing-chair gone—and his

castle wandering away in the forest with Sleep-Alone in charge. Won't your cousin be thrilled to have such a fine place to sleep in, Chinky?"

The Wishing-Chair didn't go back to the play-room—it went to Mrs. Spell's room.

They went in to see Mrs. Spells, and told her their extraordinary adventures. To their surprise, Cinders was there and produced some excellent fruit buns that Mrs. Spells said he had just made. He really was a most remarkable cat.

Mollie glanced out of the window that looked out on the sea. "Oh, look!" she cried, "there's our ship! The Molliel I wondered what would happen to her. She's come back, Mr. Spells." "Cinders brought her back," said Mrs. Spells. "He knew the ship wouldn't be needed again."

"It was a grand adventure," said Mollie. "I was scared at times, you know—but somehow I knew everything would be all right with Mr. Spells there. Thank you, Mr. Spells, for being such a good friend."

"Delighted," said the enchanter. "Now it's time you went home."

The children went to find the Wishing-Chair, which was still in the back yard. They climbed into it with Winks and Chinky.

"Take us home, Chair!" cried Peter—and up into the air it rose, flapping its big wings—and in five minutes' time they were all back in the play-room once more.

## WINKS AND CHINKY ARE SILLY

The Wishing-Chair seemed tired with all its ad→ventures. It stood in its place for ten whole days and didn't grow its wings.

"We've only got a week and two days left be→fore we go back to school," said Mollie, who was a bit worried. "I do hope we have another adven→ture before we have to say good-bye to you, Chinky. Where's Winks?"

"I don't know. He was here last night, looking very mysterious," said Chinky. "You know, the way he looks when he's up to some kind of mischief. I just hope he won't get into trouble."

"You know he lost my doll's gloves on the last adventure? He says he dropped them into the sea," said Mollie. "Now his hands show up again—that awful blue colour!"

"I know. The things he loses!" said Chinky. "He came in without his shoes the other day, and said he'd lost them. I said: 'Well, where did you take them off, Winks?' And he said he'd lost them with→out even taking them off. How could anyone do that?"

"Sh! Here he is!" said Mollie. "Oh, Winks! Your hands aren't blue any more! They're the right colour! How did you manage that?"

"Aha-ha-ha!" said Winks. "I've got a secret."

"What is it?" asked Chinky at once.

"Well, it won't be a secret if I tell it," said Winks annoyingly.

"Have you been to see Mr. Spells?" said Mollie.



"No. I went to see Witch Wendle," said Winks. "I borrowed her wand—it's got very good magic in it."

"Do you mean to say old Witch Wendle lent you her wand?" said Chinky disbelievingly. "Why, it was only last week you told me you put her chimney pot upside down so that her smoke blew down into her kitchen. I don't believe you!"

"All right, then—but here's the wand, see?" said Winks, and he suddenly produced the wand from under his coat. It was a small, neat wand, not long and slender like Chinky's. He waved it about.

Mollie and Peter stared in surprise—and Chinky jumped up in alarm.

"WINKS! You took it without asking? I know you did. Witch Wendle would never lend her wand to you—why, look, it's absolutely full of magic!"

So it was. All wands glitter and shine and gleam and shimmer when they are full of magic, and this one was quite dazzling.

"I just borrowed it for a little while," said Winks. "The witch has gone to call on her sister. She won't miss it. I'll take it back soon. I wished my hands the right colour again—wasn't I pleased when they came all right!"

"You're a very bad, naughty brownie," said Chinky. "You ought to go back to Mister Grim's school. I've a good mind to make you go back!"

"Don't you talk like that to me, or I shall lose my temper," said Winks, crossly, and he poked the wand at Chinky.

"Stop it," said Chinky. "You should never poke people with wands. Surely you know that? And let me tell you this—I shall talk to you how I like. You take that wand back to Witch Wendle AT ONCE!"

"I don't like you, Chinky," said Winks, looking suddenly cross. "I shall wish for a Maggle-Mig to

chase you!"

He waved his wand in the air —and goodness gracious, whatever was this extraordinary creature running in at the door?

It was rather like a small giraffe, but it had feathers, and it wore shoes on its four feet. It galloped round the room after Chinky. The children fled to a cupboard. If this was a Maggle-mig, they didn't like it! Winks sat down on the sofa and roared with laughter. Chinky was furious.

He rushed to the toy cupboard and felt about for his wand. He waved it in the air. "Maggle- mig, change to a Snickeroo and chase Winks!" he cried. And at once the little giraffe-like creature changed to a thing like a small crocodile with horns. It ran at Winks, who leapt off the sofa in a hurry.

Winks waved his wand at the Snickeroo and it ran into the fireplace and completely vanished. Winks pointed the wand at Chinky.

"Horrid Chinky! Grow a long nose!"

And poor Chinky did! It was so long that he almost fell over it! Winks took hold of it and pulled it.

Chinky hit out at Winks with his own wand. "Grow a tail!" he yelled.

And, hey presto! Winks grew a tail—one like a cow's, with a tuft at the end. It swung to and fro, and Winks looked down at it in alarm. He tried to run away from the swinging tail, but you can't leave a tail that's growing on you, of course, and the tail followed him, swinging to and fro.

"Ha, ha!" said Chinky. "A brownie with a tail!"

Winks was crying now. He picked up his wand, 160

which he had dropped. He and Chinky hit out at each other at the same moment.

"I'll change you into a puff of smoke!" shouted Winks.

"I'll change you into a horrid smell!" cried Chinky.

And then they both disappeared! Mollie and Peter stared in the utmost dismay. A little puff of green smoke blew across the room and disappeared out of the door. A horrid smell drifted about the room for a few minutes and then that went, too.

Mollie burst into tears. "Now look what's happened!" she sobbed. "We've lost both Chinky and Winks."

Peter saw that the two wands were on the floor. He picked up Chinky's and put it into the toy cupboard. Then he picked up the one Winks had taken from Witch Wendle's and looked at it. Mollie gave a cry.

"Don't meddle with it, Peter. Don't!"

"I'm not going to," said Peter. "I'm just wondering what to do about all this. It's very serious. I think we ought to take this wand back to Witch Wendle."

"Oh, let's take it back quickly then," said Mollie. "And perhaps if we do she'll tell us what to do about Chinky and Winks. How shall we find the way?"

"We might ask Mr. Spells, began Peter, and then suddenly stopped in delight. He pointed behind Mollie.

She turned and saw that the Wishing-Chair was growing its wings again! The buds on its four legs burst into feathers, and soon the big green and yellow wings were waving gently in the air.

"Oh! What a bit of luck!" cried Mollie. "Now we can get in the Wishing-Chair and just tell it to go to Witch Wendle's!"

Peter sat in the chair and pulled Mollie down beside him. He had the witch's wand in his hand.

"Wishing-Chair, we want to go to Witch Wendle's," he said. "Go at once!"

The chair rose into the air, and made for the door. Out it went and up into the cloudy sky. It made for an opening in the clouds and shot through it. Now the children were in the sunshine above.

They flew for a long way. and then Mollie shouted in surprise, and pointed. "Look! What's that? It's a castle in the clouds!"

Both children stared. It was a very surprising sight indeed. A big purple cloud loomed ahead, thick and gloomy. Set in its depths was what looked exactly like a castle, with towers and turrets. The chair flew straight to the cloud and stopped. It hovered just above the cloud, and the children couldn't get down.

"Go lower, Chair!" cried Peter. But the chair didn't. A head popped out of a window of the castle.

"Wait! I'll get you cloud-shoes! If you walk on the cloud without them you'll fall."

The head disappeared. Then out of the castle came Witch Wendle, a bright star glinting at the top of her pointed hat. She carried what looked like snowshoes, big flat things, to fasten to their feet.

"Here you all!" she said. "Put these on your feet and you will be able to walk easily on the clouds. That's why your Wishing-Chair wouldn't land—it knew it would be dangerous for you without cloud-shoes."

"Oh, thank you," said Mollie. She liked Witch Wendle very much, because her face smiled and her eyes twinkled. The children put on the cloud-shoes and then stepped down on the cloud. Ah, they could get along quite well now—it felt rather as if they were sliding on very, very soft snow.

"What a strange home you have, set high in the clouds," said Peter.

"Oh, people often build these," said the witch. "Have you never heard of people building castles in the air? Well, this is one of them. They don't last very long, but they are very comfortable. I've had this one about two months now."

She led the way to her curious castle. "We've come to bring you your wand," said Peter. "I must tell you all that happened."

So he did, and the witch listened in silence. "That tiresome Winks!" she said. "He should never have left Mister Grim's school."

"What can we do about Chinky and Winks," said Mollie, "now that they are a puff of smoke and a horrid smell? Where have they gone?"

"To the Land of Spells," said the witch. "We'll have to get your Wishing-Chair to go there—come along!"

XXIII

## WHAT HAPPENED IN THE LAND OF SPELLS

The witch led the way to where the Wishing-Chair stood waiting patiently on the edge of the cloud, its wings flapping gently.

"That's a really wonderful chair of yours," she said. "I only wish I had one like it!"

They all sat in it. "To the Land of Spells!" com-manded the witch, and the chair at once rose into the air. It left the cloud and the curious castle built in the air, and flew steadily to the north.

"I'm very glad to have back my wand," said Witch Wendle. "Luckily it is only my third best one. If it had been my best one, the magic would have been so powerful that it would have shriv-elled Winks up as soon as he touched it."

Mollie and Peter at once made up their minds that they would never, never touch any wand be-longing to a witch or wizard. Goodness—what a blessing that it had been the witch's third best wand and not her best one!

The chair flew on for a long while and the witch pointed out the interesting places they passed— the Village of Stupids, the Country of No-Goods, the Land of Try-Again, and all

kinds of places the children had never heard of before. They stared down at them in interest.

"What's the Land of Spells like?" asked Mollie.

"It's a strange land, really," said the witch. "All

kinds of spells wander about, and bump into you— Invisible Spells to make you invisible, Tall Spells to make you tall, Laughter Spells to make you laugh—they've only got to touch you to affect you at once."

"Oh dear," said Mollie in alarm. "I don't like the sound of that at all."

"You needn't worry," said Witch Wendle. "They only affect you whilst they bump into you— as soon as they drift away you're all right again. We shall have to look for a puff of smoke and detect a horrid smell—then we shall know we've got Winks and Chinky and I must do my best to put them right for you."

The Chair flew rapidly downwards, and landed in a very peculiar place. It was full of a blue-green mist and queer sounds went on all the time— sounds of rumbling, sounds of music, of bells, and of the wind blowing strongly.

They got off the chair. "Now take hands," said the witch. "And keep together, please. You're all right so long as you're with me, because I am a mistress of all spells—but don't slip away for goodness' sake, or you may get changed into a white butterfly or a blue beetle, and I would find it difficult to know you again."

Mollie and Peter held hands very hard indeed, and Mollie took the witch's hand, too. And then all kinds of extraordinary things began to happen.

A little trail of yellow bubbles bumped into Mollie—and, to Peter's great alarm, Mollie's neck grew alarmingly long, and shot up almost as tall as a tree! She was very alarmed, too.

"It's all right," said Witch Wendle. "It will pass as soon as the trail of bubbles goes."

She was right. When the bubbles flew off in another direction, Mollie's neck came down to its right size! "You did look queer, Mollie," said Peter. "Don't do that again!"

It was queer to think of spells wandering about like this. Mollie began to look out for them and try to dodge them. She dodged a silvery mist, but it wound itself round Witch Wendle—and she at once disappeared completely.

"Where's she gone?" cried Peter in fright.

"I've still got hold of her hand," said Mollie. "I think she's only invisible—but she's here all right."

"Yes, I'm here," said the witch's voice. As soon as the silvery mist cleared away she became visible again and smiled down at the children. "I didn't see that spell coming or I would have dodged it," she said. "Oh dear—here's an annoying one coming!"

Something that looked like a little shower of white snowflakes came dropping down on them. The witch changed into a big white bear, Peter changed into a white goat and Mollie into a white cat! That lasted about two minutes, and they were all very glad when they were back to their right shapes again.

They went wandering through the queer misty land, listening to the queer noises around, trying to dodge the spells that came near them. The witch put out her hand and



captured a tiny little spell floating through the air. It looked like a small white daisy.

"I've always wanted that spell," she said to the children. "It's a good spell—if you put it under a baby's pillow it makes a child grow up as pretty as a flower."

Suddenly Peter stopped and sniffed. "Pooh! What a smell of bad fish!" he said. "I'm sure that must be Winks. Can you smell a horrid smell, Witch Wendle?"

"I should think I can," said the witch. She took a small bottle out of her pocket and uncorked it.

"Come here to me, you bad little smell,

Into this bottle you'll fit very well!"

she sang. And the children saw a very faint purplish streak streaming into the bottle. The witch corked it up.

"Well, we've got Winks all right," she said. "Now for Chinky. Look—here comes a puff of green smoke. Would that be him?"

"Yes!" said Peter. "I'm sure it is. He and Winks would be certain to keep together."

The witch took a small pair of bellows from under her long, flowing cloak and held them out to the puff of green smoke, which was hovering near. She opened the bellows and drew in the puff of smoke! She hung the bellows on her belt again.

"And now we've got Chinky," she said. "Good! We'd better get back home now, and see what we can do with them. It's so easy to change people into bad smells and green smoke—

any beginner can do that—but it takes a powerful witch or wizard to change them back to their own shapes again."

They walked back to find the Wishing-Chair, still bumping into curious spells every now and again. Mollie walked into a Too-Big spell and immediately towered over the witch and Peter. But she went back to her own size almost at once.

The witch bumped into a train of bright bubbles that burst as they touched her. When they looked at her they saw that she had changed into a beautiful young girl, and they were amazed. But she was soon her old self again.

"That was a nice spell," she said with a sigh. "I should like to have caught that spell and kept it. Ah, is that the Wishing-Chair?"

"Yes—but there's only half of it!" said Mollie, in surprise. "Oh, I see—it's just been touched by an invisible spell—it's coming all right again now."

Soon they were sitting in the chair. "To the children's playroom," commanded the witch. "And hurry! The puff of smoke in the bellows is trying to get out. We'll lose Chinky for ever if he puffs himself out, and gets lost on the wind."

"Oh dear!" said Mollie. "Do hurry, Wishing-Chair!"

The Wishing-Chair hurried so much that the witch lost her hat in the wind and the chair had to go back for it. But at last they were flying down to the playroom, and in at the door. Thank goodness!

The Witch got carefully out of the chair. She took the bellows from her waist. "Is there a suit of Chinky's anywhere?" she asked. Mollie got Chinky's second-best one from the

cupboard. "Hold it up," said the witch. "That's right. Now watch!"

Mollie held up the little suit. The witch took the bellows and blew with them. Green smoke came from them and filled the little suit, billowing it out, and—would you believe it?—it was Chinky himself filling it out, growing arms and legs and head—and there he was standing before them in his second-best suit, looking rather scared after his curious stay in the Land of Spells!

Then it was Winks' turn. The witch asked for the teapot and took off the lid. She uncorked the bottle in which she had put the bad smell, and emptied it into the teapot. She put on the lid.

Then she lifted up the teapot and poured something out of the spout, singing as she did so:

"Teapot, teapot, pour for me

A brownie naughty as can be,

He's not as clever as he thinks,

That Wicked, wilful little Winks!"

And before the children's astonished eyes the teapot poured out Winks! He came out in a kind of stream, which somehow built itself up into Winks

himself!

When Winks saw Witch Wendle he went very red and tried to hide behind the sofa. She pulled him out, saying, "Who stole my wand? Who changed Chinky into a puff of smoke?"

"Well, he changed me into a bad smell," said Winks, beginning to sniff.

"He at least used his own wand to do it with," said the witch. "Winks, I'm sending you back to Mister Grim's school. You've a lot to learn."

Winks howled so loudly that Mollie felt very sorry for him.

"Please," she said, "could he just stay with us till we go back to boarding school? We might have another adventure, a nice one."

"Very well," said Witch Wendle. "One week more. Don't sniff like that, Winks. You bring all your trouble on yourself."

"I'm sorry, Witch Wendle," wailed Winks.

"You'll be sorry till next time—then you will do something tiresome once more and be sorry all over again," said the witch. "I know you, Winks! Well, good-bye, children. I'm very pleased to have met you—and, by the way, may I sometimes borrow that Wishing-Chair of yours when you are at school? It would be such a treat for me to do my shopping in it sometimes."

"Oh, yes, please do," said Mollie at once. "It would be a nice return for all your help. You'll have to go to Chinky's mother to borrow it when we're at school. He keeps it there."

"Thank you," said the witch, and off she went. Chinky turned to Winks. "We were silly to quarrel like that," he said. "I'm sorry I turned you into a bad smell, Winks. Go and wash. I still think you smell a bit horrid."

So he did—and it was two or three days before he smelt like a brownie again. You just can't meddle with spells, you

know!

XXIV

## THE ISLAND OF SURPRISES

"You know," said Mollie to Chinky, "we've only one more day before we go back to school. Mother has already sent off our trunks."

"Oh dear," said Chinky, sadly. "The holidays have simply flown! I do wish you didn't have to go to school."

"Well—we love being at home—but we really do love school, too," said Peter. "It's great fun, you know—and it's so nice being with scores of boys and girls who are our own age. I'm awfully glad we do go to boarding-school, really, though, of course, I'm sorry to say good-bye to Mother and Daddy and you and the garden and Jane and the Wishing-Chair, and everything."

"We never went to the Land of Goodness Knows Where," said Mollie. "I'd like to go before

we leave for school."

"Wishing-Chair, you might grow your wings quickly," said Peter, looking at the chair standing quietly in its place. "You really might!"

And, dear me, for once in a way the chair was most obliging and began to grow them! Unfortunately the children didn't notice that it was actually doing what it was told, and they went out into the garden to play.

The next thing that happened was the chair flying out of the door of the playroom, its wings flapping strongly!

Luckily Chinky caught sight of it, or goodness knows where it would have gone by itself. He felt the swish of the big wings, and looked up. The chair was just passing by his head!

He gave such a yell that Mollie and Peter jumped in fright. They turned, to see Chinky making a tremendous leap into the air after the chair. He caught one leg and held on. "Help! Help!" he yelled to the children. "Come and help me, or the chair will go off with me like this."

However, the chair went down to the ground, and allowed Chinky to sit in it properly. Mollie and Peter ran up eagerly.

"Gracious! Whatever made us leave the play-room door open?" said Peter. "The chair might have flown off anywhere and not come back. We shall really have to get a watch-dog for it."

"It was lucky I just saw it," said Chinky. "Well now—shall we go to the Land of Goodness Knows Where or not? Is there anywhere else you'd like to

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The children couldn't think of anywhere else, so the chair was told to go there. It flew off in the right direction at once. It was a lovely, clear day, with hardly any cloud at all. The children and Chinky could see down below them very clearly indeed.

"Go lower, Chair," said Chinky. "We'd like to see the places we're flying over." The chair obediently flew down lower still, and then Chinky gave a shout.

"Look—there's Winks! Isn't it Winks?"

It was. He, too, saw the chair and waved madly.

"Shall we take him with us?" said Chinky.

"Well—it's his last chance of coming with us for a long time," said Mollie. "We said we'd let him come with us once more, didn't we, before he goes back to Mister Grim's school. We'll take him."

So they ordered the chair to go down to the ground to fetch Winks. He was simply delighted. He clambered on to it at once. "Did you come to fetch me?" he said. "How nice of you."

"Well, actually we weren't fetching you," said Chinky. "The chair suddenly grew its wings, flew out into the garden, and I just managed to grab it in time. It was a bit of luck, catching sight of you like that. Winks, you must try and be good to-day— don't spoil our last adventure by being silly or naughty, please. We're going to the Land of Goodness Knows Where."

"That's a silly land," said Winks. "Why don't you go somewhere more exciting—the Land of Birthdays, or the Land of Treats, or the Village of Parties—somewhere like that."

They were just passing over a big blue lake. They came to an island in the middle of it, and as they flew over it a surprising thing happened. Fireworks went off with a bang, and coloured stars burst and fell all round the chair. It was startled and wobbled dangerously, almost upsetting the children.

"Gracious!" said Mollie. "What a surprise! What island is that?"

"Oh!" cried Chinky, in great excitement, "I do believe it's the Island of Surprises! Isn't it, Winks? I really think it is."

"Yes," said Winks, peering down. "It is! Look out, here comes another rocket or something. My word—what a lovely shower of coloured stars!"

"Can't we go to this island?" said Mollie. "Chinky, let's go."

"Right," said Chinky. "Mind you, the surprises may not all be nice ones—but if you're willing to risk that, we'll go."

"Of course we'll go!" said Winks. "Chair, go down to the island at once, please."

Down went the chair, dodging another rocket. It landed on a patch of green grass, which at once changed into a sheet of water! The chair almost sank, but just managed to get itself out in time, and flew to a little paved courtyard.

"First surprise," said Chinky, with a grin. "We shall have to be careful here, you know. Winks, you mustn't be an idiot on this island—you'll get some unpleasant shocks if you are."

"Can we leave the chair here?" said Mollie doubtfully. "It would be a horrid surprise if we found it gone when we came back for it."

The chair creaked and flew towards Mollie. "It says it's not going to leave us!" said Chinky, with a grin. "Very wise of it. Right, Chair, you follow us like a dog, and we'll all be very pleased."

So the chair followed them closely.

The first really nice surprise came when they saw a table set out in the sunshine, with empty dishes and plates in a row.



The children, Chinky and Winks stopped to look at them. "Is there go-ing to be a party or something?" said Peter.

A small goblin came up and sat himself down on the form by the table. He stared earnestly at the plate and dish in front of him. And, hey presto, on the dish came a large chocolate pudding, and on his plate came a big ice-cream to match. He began to eat, beaming all over his ugly little face.

"Oooh," said Winks at once, and sat down at the table. So did the others. They all stared hard at their dishes and plates.

Mollie got a pile of sausages on her dish and some fried onions on her plate. Peter got a big trifle on his dish and a jug of cream on his plate. Chinky got strawberries on his dish and found his plate swimming in sugar and cream to go with them.

They looked to see what Winks had got. That bad little brownie, of course, had been tricky as usual. He had put two plates and two dishes in front of him!

But he wasn't looking at all pleased! On one dish had appeared a wonderful-looking pie—but when he cut the crust there was nothing in the pie. On the other dish had appeared a chocolate cake— and, as we know, that was the one cake that poor Winks simply couldn't bear to eat.

On one plate had come some steaming cabbage and on the other two prunes. How the others laughed!

"A pie with nothing in it—a cake he hates— cabbage—and prunes! Oh, Winks, what a horrid surprise. It serves you right for being greedy!" cried Chinky.

Winks was cross. He stood sulkily whilst the others tucked into their exciting food. Mollie was sorry for him and offered him a sausage.

The next surprise was also a very nice one. They finished their meal and then suddenly heard the sound of loud music coming from around the corner. They hurried to see what it was.

It was a roundabout! There it stood, decorated with flags that waved in the wind, going round and round, the music playing gaily. How lovely!

"How much is it to go for a ride on this roundabout," asked Chinky, feeling in his pocket.

"Oh, nothing!" said the pixie in charge of it. "It's just a nice surprise for you. Get on when it stops."

When the roundabout stopped, the children saw that there were all kinds of animals and birds to ride, and each of them went up and down as well as round and round. The brownies, goblins and pixies who had had their turns got off, and the children, Chinky and Winks looked to see which animal or bird they would choose to ride.

"I'll have this pony," said Mollie, who loved horses and always wanted one of her own. She climbed on to a dear little black pony.

"I'll have this camel," said Peter. "It's got two humps, and I'll ride between them!"

Chinky chose a snow-white gull with outstretched wings that flapped as the roundabout went round. Winks chose a

big goldfish. Its fins and tail moved in a very life-like manner. Winks cut himself a little stick from the hedge nearby. "Just to make my fish swim well on the round-about," he said to the others as he climbed on.

"No whipping allowed!" shouted the pixie in charge. "Hey, you—no whipping allowed!"

The roundabout started off again. The music blared gaily, the animals, fish and birds went round and round, up and down, flapping their wings and fins, nodding their heads and waving tail—all very exciting indeed.

And Winks was disobedient—he whipped his goldfish with his stick! "Gee up!" he cried.

Then he got such a shock. The goldfish suddenly shot right off the roundabout through the air and disappeared! The roundabout slowed down and came to a stop. The pixie in charge looked very angry.

"He whipped his goldfish and I told him not to. Now I've lost the goldfish, and my master will be very angry with me."

"Oh dear!" said Mollie, getting off her pony.

"I'm so very sorry. Winks did promise to be good. Where has he gone, do you think?"

Then there suddenly came the sound of a terrific splash, and a loud wail came on the air. "That's Winks," cried Peter, beginning to run. "Whatever has happened to him?"

XXV

HOME AGAIN—AND GOOD-BYE

The yells went on and on and on. "Help me! I'm drowning! Help, help, HELP!"

The children and Chinky tore round the corner. The sea lay in front of them, blue and calm. The goldfish was swimming about in it, looking enormous. Winks was splashing and struggling in the water, and every time he tried to wade out, the goldfish bumped him with his nose and sent him under.

There was a crowd of little people yelling with laughter. Peter waded in and pulled Winks out. The goldfish flapped out, too, and lay on the beach. It didn't seem to mind leaving the water at all—but then, as Mollie said, it wasn't a real, live fish. It was just a roundabout one.

"Winks, we're not a bit sorry for you," said Peter. "As usual, you brought your trouble on yourself. Now, just pick up that fish and take it back to the roundabout."

The fish was big but not heavy. Winks groaned and put it on his shoulder. It flapped its fins and made itself as difficult to carry as it possibly could. Winks staggered back to the roundabout with it.

But the roundabout was gone. It had completely disappeared.

"Well," said Winks, dumping the fish on the ground at once. "I'm not carrying this fish any longer, then."

But the others made him. "We might meet the pixie in charge of the roundabout," said Peter. "And you could give it him back then. He was very upset at losing it."

So Winks had to stagger along carrying the goldfish. Still, as Peter said, if he was going to make trouble, he could jolly

well carry his own troubles!

It certainly was an Island of Surprises. There was a surprise round almost every corner! For one thing, there was a wonderful Balloon Tree. It had buds that blew up into balloons. Under the tree sat a brownie with a ball of string. You could choose your own balloon, pick it off the tree, and then get the neck tied with string by the brownie. They all chose balloons at once.

Winks stayed behind and they had to go back and fetch him. He had done a very surprising thing. He had picked six of the biggest balloons and had got enough string from the brownie to tie each of them to the big goldfish. And just as Chinky and the children reached the Balloon Tree again they saw Winks set the goldfish free in the wind—and the breeze took hold of the balloons and carried goldfish and all high up in the air.

"Oh, Winks!" said Mollie. "Now look what you've done!"

Winks grinned. "Just a little surprise for the goldfish," he said. "Thank goodness I've got rid of him."

Well, what can you do with a brownie like that? The others gave him up in despair and walked on again. The Wishing-Chair followed them closely, as if it was a bit afraid of the Island of Surprises.

Round the next corner was another surprise. There were a dozen small motor cars that seemed to go by magic. "Come and race, come and race!" chanted a little goblin. "The winner can choose his own prize!"

The prizes were as exciting as the little cars. There was a purse that always had money in it no matter how many times you took it out.

There was a little clock that didn't strike the hour, but called them out in a dear little voice. "It is now twelve o'clock!" And there was a teapot that would pour out any drink you liked to men-tion.

"Ooooh—do let's try a race!" cried Winks, and he leapt into a fine blue car. "I want one of those prizes!

They all chose cars. The goblin set them in a row and showed them how to work them. "Just press hard on these buttons, first with one foot and then with the other," he said. "Now—are you ready —one, two, three, GO!"

And off they went. Winks bumped into Chinky and both cars fell over. Mollie's foot slipped off one button and her car stopped for a moment or two. But Peter shot ahead and won the race, whilst all the little folk cheered and clapped.

"Choose your prize," said the goblin. Peter chose a little dish with a lid. It was a wonderful dish. Every time you lifted the lid there was some titbit there—a sausage or a bar of chocolate or an orange, or an ice-cream—something like that. Peter thought it would be very useful indeed to keep in the playroom.

They had a wonderful time that day. Once the surprise was not very nice. They went to sit down for a rest on some dear little rocking chairs. The chairs at once began to rock as soon as everyone was sitting in them—and they rocked so violently that everyone was thrown roughly out on the ground.

The goblin in charge laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. "Not a very pleasant surprise," said Mollie, picking

herself up and running after her balloon, which was blowing away. "Funny to watch, I dare say—but not funny to do!"

They kept having titbits out of the Titbit Dish, but Mollie wished there were more ice-creams. So it was a lovely surprise when they came to a big public fountain, which had a tap labelled: "Ice-cream Tap. TURN AND SAY WHAT KIND."

Mollie turned it at once. "Chocolate ice-cream," she said, and out came a stream of chocolate cream that ran into a small cornet underneath and froze at once.

"Oh, look!" cried Peter. They had come to the little field, and in it were big white swans waiting to take people for flights in the air.

"Shall we have a fly?" said Peter. "Do you think the Wishing-Chair will be jealous if we do?"

"I think one of us had better stay down on the ground with the chair, whilst the others are having a turn at flying on the birds," said Mollie. "Just in case it flies off in a huff, you know."

So Mollie sat in the Wishing-Chair whilst the others chose swans and rose up in the air on the backs of the beautiful white birds.

When it was Winks' turn to sit in the Wishing-Chair and stay with it, whilst the others rode on the swans, he thought he would get the chair to chase the swans and make them fly faster!

And up went the Wishing-Chair into the air and began to chase the swans, bumping into their tails and creaking at them in a most alarming manner. One swan was so startled that it turned almost up-side down trying to get away from

the Wishing- Chair—and the rider on its back fell headlong to the ground.

It was a witch! Fortunately she had her broom→stick with her and she managed to get on that as she fell.

She was so angry with Winks! She called the Wishing-Chair to the ground at once and scolded Winks so hard that he tried to hide under the chair in a fright. Mollie, Peter and Chinky flew down at once, angry, too, because of his mischievous trick.

"Ha, Chinky!" said the angry witch, "is this brownie a friend of yours? Who is he?"

"He's Winks," said Chinky.

"What—Winks, who turned his grandmother's pigs blue?" cried the witch. "I thought he was at Mister Grim's school. Well—it's time he was back there. Swan, come here!"

A big white swan flew down to her. The witch picked up Winks as if he were a feather and sat him firmly down on the swan's back.

"Now," she said to the swan, "take Winks to Mister Grim's school and deliver him to Mister

Grim himself."

"Oh, no, oh, no!" wailed Winks. "Mollie, Pe→ter, don't let me go."

"You'll have to, Winks," said Mollie. "You re→ally are too naughty for anything. Try to be good this term, and perhaps



you'll be allowed to spend your next holidays with Chinky and us. Good-bye."

"But I shan't get enough to eat! I always have to go without my dinner!" wailed Winks.

Peter couldn't help feeling sorry for him. "Here —take the Titbit Dish," he said, and pushed it into Winks' hands. "You'll always have something nice to eat, then."

Winks' tears dried up at once. He beamed. "Oh, thank you, Peter—how wonderful! Now I don't mind going back a bit! I'll be as good as anything. I'll see you all next holidays. Good-bye!"

And off he went on the swan, back to Mister Grim's school for Brownies, hugging the Titbit Dish in joy.

"He's very, very naughty, and I can't help think-ing that Mister Grim's school is the only place for him," said Mollie. "But I do like him very much, all the same."

"Look, the sun's going down," said Chinky sud-denly. "We must go. They say the Island of Sur-prises always disappears at sunset, and we don't want to disappear with it. Quick—it's disappear-ing already!"

So it was! Parts of it began to look misty and dream-like. The children and Chinky went to the Wishing-Chair at once. "Home, Wishing-Chair," said Mollie. "Quick, before we all disappear with the Island. That witch has vanished already!"

And home to the playroom they went. They heard Mother ringing the bell for bedtime just as they arrived.

"Oh dear—our very last adventure these holi-days, I'm afraid," said Mollie. "Chinky, you'll take the chair to your

mother's won't you, and take great care of it for us? You know the date we come back home from school. Be here in time to welcome us!"

"We'll slip in and say a last good-bye before we leave for school," promised Peter. "Don't be lonely without us, Chinky, will you? And couldn't you go and see Winks once or twice at school—in the Wishing-Chair—just to cheer him up?"

"I'll see if my mother will let me," said Chinky. "She doesn't like Winks, you know. Anyway, he will be quite happy with the Titbit Dish, Peter. It was nice of you to give it to him."

"Good-bye, Wishing-Chair," said Mollie, patting it. "You've taken us on some wonderful adventures this time. Be ready to take us again next holidays, won't you?"

The chair creaked loudly, as if it, too, were saying good-bye. The bedtime bell rang again, this time quite impatiently.

"We must go!" said Mollie, and she gave Chinky a hug. "We are lucky to have you and a Wishing-Chair, we really are! Good-bye!"

Good-bye, too, Mollie, Peter, Chinky, Winks and the Wishing-Chair. We'll see you all again some day, we hope!

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EGMONT

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## THE WITCH'S CAT

ONE afternoon Mollie and Peter were talking to Chinky the pixie in their playroom. Mollie was sitting in the magic chair, knitting as she talked. She was making a warm scarf for Chinky, who often used to go out at night and talk to the fairies in the garden. It was still very cold, and Mollie was afraid he would get a chill.

Peter and Chinky were not looking at Mollie at all - and then a dreadful thing happened! The chair grew its red wings all of a sudden, spread them out, and flew straight out of the open door! Yes - with Mollie in it, all alone! Peter and Chinky gave a shout of dismay, and rushed after it. They were too late - the chair rose over the trees, and the last they saw of Mollie was her pale anxious face looking over the arm at them.

"I say! The chair oughtn't to do that!" said Peter. "Now what are we to do?"

"We can't do anything," said Chinky. "We must just hope that the chair comes back safely, that's all."

Mollie had the surprise of her life when the chair rose up so suddenly. She wondered where in the world it would take her to. It flew a long way, and when it came down Mollie saw that a very thick dark wood lay beneath her

Mollie peeped into the cottage, and inside she saw an old witch.

The chair squeezed its way through the trees, and Mollie crouched down in the chair, for the branches scratched against her face. At last she was on firm ground again, and

she jumped off the chair to see where she was. She saw, not far off, a beautiful little cottage, and to her surprise, there were pink and red roses out all around it - which was very astonishing, for it was only the month of February.

"Perhaps a fairy lives there," thought Mollie, and she went up to the cottage. The door was shut, but there was a light in the window. Mollie thought she had better peep into the cottage and just see who lived there before she knocked at the door. So she did - and inside she saw an old witch, standing before a curious fire whose flames were bright purple, stirring something in a big green pot.

"Ooh!" thought Mollie. "It's a witch. I don't think I'll go in!"

Suddenly the witch looked up - and she saw Mollie peeping in. In a trice, she threw down the ladle she was using and ran to the door.

"What are you spying on me for?" she shouted, in such a rage that her face went red as a sunset. "Come here! Let me see who you are! If you are a spy, I'll soon deal with you!"

"But I'm not!" said poor Mollie. She thought she had better run away, so she turned - but the witch caught hold of the sleeve of her frock.

"You go indoors," she said, and pushed Mollie into the cottage. She slammed the door and went back to her green pot, which was now singing a curious tune to itself, and puffing out pale yellow steam.

"Go and help the cat to make my bed," ordered the witch. "I won't have you peeping round whilst I make this spell!"

Mollie looked round for the cat. There was one in the corner, busily washing up some dishes in the sink. It was a black

cat, but its eyes were as blue as forget-me-nots. How strange!

The cat put down the tea-cloth and ran into the next room. There was a bed there, and the two set to work to make it. As they were in the middle of it, the witch called sharply to the cat:

"Puss! Come here a minute! I need your help."

The cat at once ran to her - and Mollie took the chance to look round. She saw that the bedroom window- was open. Good! It wouldn't take her long to slip out of it and run back to her chair!

She climbed out - but in doing so she knocked over a big vase on the window-sill. Crash! The witch at once guessed what was happening. She rushed into the bedroom, and tried to get hold of Mollie's leg - but she was too late! Mollie was running between the trees!

"Cat! Chase her! Scratch her! Bring her back at once!" yelled the witch.

The blue-eyed cat at once leapt out of the window and rushed after Mollie. How they ran! Mollie reached the wishing-chair, jumped into it, and cried, "Home, quickly!"

It rose up - but the cat gave an enormous leap and jumped on to one arm of the chair. Mollie tried to push it off, but it dug its claws into the arm, and wouldn't leave go.

"You horrid creature!" said the little girl, almost in tears. "Get off my chair!"

But the cat wouldn't move. The chair rose higher and higher. Mollie wondered what she should do if the cat flew at her -



but it didn't. It crawled down into the chair, hid behind a cushion there, and seemed to go to sleep!

After a while Mollie saw that she was near her own garden. She was glad. The chair went down to the playroom, and Peter and Chinky rushed out excitedly. Peter hugged Mollie, and so did Chinky. They had been so worried about her.

Mollie told them her adventure. "And the funny thing is," she said, "the witch's cat is still in the chair! He didn't scratch me - he hid behind the cushion!"

Chinky ran to the chair and lifted up the cushion - yes, there was the cat! It opened its great blue eyes and looked at Chinky.

The pixie stared hard at it. Then he ran his hands over the cat's sleek back, and shouted in surprise.

"Come here, children, and feel! This isn't a proper witch's cat! Can you feel these bumps on its back?"

Sure enough, Peter and Mollie could quite well feel two little bumps there.

"This cat was a fairy once," said Chinky, in excitement. "You can always tell by feeling along the back. If there are two bumps there, you know that that was where the wings of the fairy grew, once upon a time. I say! I wonder who this fairy was!"

"Can't we change the cat back into its right shape?" asked Peter, in great excitement.

"I'll try!" said clever Chinky. He drew a chalk circle on the floor, and then put a chalk square outside that. He stood between the circle and the square, and put the cat in the

middle. Then he told the children to pour water on the cat whilst he recited some magic words.

Both children poured water on the silent cat, whilst Chinky chanted a string of strange words.

Peter got a jug of water, and Mollie got a vase. Both children poured water on the silent cat, whilst Chinky chanted a string of strange words.

And then a most peculiar thing happened! The cat grew larger - and larger. The bumps on its back broke out into a pair of bright blue wings. The cat stood upright on its hind legs - and suddenly the whole of the black fur peeled away and fell off - and inside was the most beautiful fairy that the children had ever imagined!

He had the brightest blue eyes, and shining golden hair, and he smiled in delight at Chinky.

"Thank you!" he said. "I am Prince Merry, brother to the Princess Sylfai. The witch caught me and changed me into a cat at the same time as she caught my lovely sister. She sold her to the Green Enchanter, and she is still a prisoner."

"Oh, your highness!" cried Chinky, bowing low before the beautiful prince. "It is such an honour to have returned you to your right shape. What a good thing Mollie flew to the witch's house!"

"It certainly was!" said Prince Merry. "I suddenly saw she had a wishing-chair out in the wood, though, of course, the witch didn't know that! I was determined to come with her in the

magic chair - but I only just managed it! It is the first time I have had a chance to escape from the witch!"

"I wish we could rescue your sister, the Princess!" cried Peter.

"That would be splendid!" said the Prince. "If we only could! But before we can get to the hill on which the Green Enchanter lives, we have to get a map to find it - and there is only one map in the world that shows the

Enchanter's Hill."

"Who has it?" asked Chinky excitedly. "The Dear-Me Goblin has it," said Merry. "He lives in the caves of the Golden Hill."

"Then we'll go there the very next time the chair grows wings!" shouted Chinky, Mollie, and Peter.

II

## THE DEAR-ME GOBLIN

PRINCE MERRY lived with Chinky in the playroom, waiting for the chair to grow its wings again. Chinky made himself Merry's servant, and did everything for him gladly and proudly. Peter and Mollie thought they were very lucky children - to have a wishing-chair of their own, a pixie for a friend, and a fairy prince living in their playroom. Nobody would believe it if they told the story of their adventures.

It was a whole week before the chair grew its red wings. It was one evening after tea, when Peter, Mollie, Chinky, and the Prince were sitting round the playroom fire, having a game of snap. All four had cards in front of them, when suddenly a draught blew the whole lot together!

"I say! Is the window open?" cried Peter, jumping up. But it wasn't. He couldn't think where the draught came from when he suddenly saw that it was the chair, flapping its red wings again! Of course! They made the wind that blew the cards together!

"Look!" cried Peter excitedly. "The chair's ready again! Come on! Is there room for us all?"

"No," said Chinky, "but the Prince has wings. So he can fly beside us. Come on - get in! I say, though - hadn't we better take a rug? It's an awfully cold night."

The children pulled a rug from the sofa, and then they and the pixie climbed in the chair, wrapping the rug closely round them. The prince opened the door, and the chair flew out at once. Merry followed it, and held on to one of the arms as he flew, so that he should not miss the way.

"I told the chair to go to the Dear-Me Goblin's cave," said Chinky. "I hope it knows the way."

It did! It flew to a hill that looked dark and lonely in the starlit night; but as soon as the chair had flown inside a big cave, and come to earth there, the children exclaimed in delight. The inside of the cave shone with a golden light, though there was no lamp of any sort to be seen.

"That's why it's called the Golden Hill," said Merry. "The whole of the hill shines like gold inside. So plenty of goblins live here because they are mean fellows, you know, and are only too pleased to live in a hill where they do not need to buy candles by which to see!"

The children and Chinky explored the golden cave. There was a passage leading away into the heart of the hill, and the four of them walked down it, able to see everything quite clearly.

Along the passage were many doors of all colours. Each door had a little notice on it, giving the name of the goblin who lived there. The children looked at them all, but could not see the name of Dear-Me. At last they came to the end door, and that had no name on at all.

"This must be Dear-Me's cave," said Merry. "It's the only one left!"

So they knocked, and the door opened. A queer- looking goblin poked out his head. He wore a wastepaper basket for a hat, and had a pencil in his mouth at which he kept puffing as if it were a pipe!

"Hallo!" he said.

"Hallo!" said Chinky. "What is your name?"

"It's on the door," said the goblin. "I've forgotten what it is."

"But it isn't on the door," said Peter. "There is no name there at all."

"Oh," said the goblin. "Well, come in, whilst I think of it."

They all went in. There was a large and cosy room made out of the cave behind the door. A fire glowed in one corner, and a small bed stuck out of the other. There was a table in the middle, and two or three stools stood here and there. There was no lamp, for the curious golden light shone here too.

"Is your name Dear-Me?" asked Chinky.

"Of course it is," said the goblin. "Every one knows that!"

"Well, you didn't seem to know it," said Merry.

"Only because it wasn't on the door," said the goblin. "What have you all come for?"

"Well, we wanted to know if you have the map that shows the hill on which the Green Enchanter lives," said Chinky.

"Yes, I have," said Dear-Me. "But, dear me! I couldn't tell you where it is at the moment!"

"Did you put it in a safe place?" asked the Prince.

"Of course!" said the goblin. "But it is always so difficult to remember safe places, isn't it?"

"Well, tell us one of your safe places, and we'll look there," said Mollie.

"It might be in that drawer," said the goblin, pointing to a drawer in the kitchen table. Mollie opened it, and then stared in the greatest surprise. It was full of pea-pods, turned brown and dry!

"Dear me!" said the goblin. "So that's where those pea-pods went to last summer. Well, look in the teapot, then, and see if the map's there."

"In the teapot/" said Peter, thinking the goblin must be quite mad. However, he looked in the teapot on the dresser, and found it full of safety-pins. The goblin was so pleased to see them.

"I couldn't think where I'd put those pins!" he said.

"You know, buttons are always coming off my clothes and I have to pin them up such a lot. So I bought a whole crowd of safety-pins and thought I'd better keep them somewhere safe in case I lost them. So I put them in the teapot - and then I couldn't remember where they were."

"Tell us another of your hiding-places," begged Chinky patiently.

"You might look in the boot-box," said the goblin.

They all looked for it.

"Where is the boot-box?" asked Peter at last. "Have you put that in a safe place too?"

"Oh, no," said the goblin. "Now let me think. Yes! I remember now - when the laundry came, the carrier wanted the basket back, so I put the clean clothes into the boot-box."

"You do think of some surprising ideas!" said Merry. "I don't suppose the washing will be clean any longer. I suppose this is it, under the mangle."

He pulled out a dirty old box in which clean shirts and collars were stuffed - but except for some old potatoes at the bottom, there was nothing else in the box at all.

"I suppose you use the boot-box for your vegetables as well," said Chinky, shaking the potatoes about.

"Oh, are there some potatoes there?" cried the goblin, pleased. "I'll cook them for my dinner then. I was just going

out to buy some, but I couldn't find my hat."

Chinky, Merry, and the children started at the wastepaper basket on the goblin's head. "Well," said Chinky, "you've got something on your head - we thought it was meant for a hat."

The goblin took the basket off and looked at it in surprise.

"It's my waste-paper basket!" he said. "Now how did that get there? I spent all the morning looking for it."

"Is this your hat?" asked Chinky, picking up something stuffed full with old newspapers.

"Dear me, yes!" said the goblin, pleased. "I must have mistaken it for the basket. I do get into such muddles sometimes. I have so much to do, you know."

"What do you have to do?" asked Mollie curiously.

"Oh - there's getting up - and having meals - and dressing - and dusting - and going to bed," said the goblin. "That reminds me - it's time for something to eat. Will you have a bit of cherry-pie?"

He darted to a cupboard, opened it, and brought out a pie; but as he went to put it on the table he fell over the waste-paper basket, and smash! the pie fell to the floor and the red juice flowed out on to the carpet!

"Dear me!" said the goblin. "That's the end of the pie, I'm afraid. Well, it wasn't a very good pie. Now, what shall I wipe



up the mess with?"

He went to the cupboard and caught up the piece of paper that lined the shelf. He was just about to mop up the mess with it when Chinky gave a cry:

"Wait!"

The pixie took the paper from him and shouted loudly:

"It's the map! Look! Fancy the goblin using it to line a shelf with! Just the sort of thing he would do!"

At that moment another goblin came rushing into the room, crying, "Your chair's flapping its wings!"

"We must go!" shouted Chinky, "or our chair will leave us behind! Good-bye, Dear-Me! Thanks for all the help you didn't give!"

Out they all ran and flung themselves into the chair. Prince Merry had the map safely in his pocket. To think how nearly they had lost it!

"Home, chair!" cried Peter, and off it went!

III

## GREEN ENCHANTER

PETER, Mollie, Prince Merry, and Chinky the pixie all looked eagerly at the dirty old map.

"See!" said Chinky, pointing. "There is the Enchanter's Hill. I will tell the wishing-chair how- to get there as soon as it grows its wings again."

"Then we will rescue Sylfai!" cried Merry.

"You can live here with Chinky," said Mollie, looking round the playroom. "I will bring you an old rug, Prince. Let us know when the chair grows its wings again."

But a dreadful thing happened when the chair next grew its pretty red wings and flapped them in the playroom - for Peter was in bed with a cold! When Chinky came climbing up the window to peep into the bedroom (the playroom was at the bottom of the garden, you remember), Mollie was ready to go - but Peter was much too sneezy and snuffly, and he was sure that his mother would be very angry if she came and found him gone. So it was decided that Mollie, Merry, and Chinky should go alone, and Merry promised to look after Mollie. They all said good-bye to Peter and left him. He felt very sad and lonely.

The chair was anxious to fly off. Mollie sat in the seat

They all said good-bye to Peter and left him.

with Chinky squeezed beside her. The Prince flew near them, holding on occasionally when the chair went very fast.

"To the Green Enchanter's Hill!" cried Chinky to the chair. "Go by way of the rainbow, and then over the snowy mountains of Lost Land."

The chair flapped steadily up into the air. The sun shone out. Then there came a big cloud, and rain fell. The sun shone through the rain and made a glorious rainbow. At once the chair flew towards it, higher and higher into the air.

It came to the topmost curve of the glittering rainbow. It balanced itself there - and then, Whooooooooosh! It slid all the way down it! What a slide that was! Mollie held her breath, and Merry's hair flew out behind him!

They slid down to the bottom of the rainbow, and then the chair flew steadily on towards some high mountains, whose snowy tops stood up through the clouds.

"There's Lost Land!" cried Chinky, pointing. "If we got lost there, there'd be no finding us again."

"Ooh!" said Mollie, shivering. "I hope the chair doesn't go down there."

It didn't. It flew on and on. Presently a big mountain- top loomed up in the distance, sticking its green head up through the clouds.

"The Green Enchanter's Hill!" cried Chinky, in delight. "We haven't taken long! Now, we must be careful. We don't want the Enchanter to know we're here."

The chair flew downwards. It came to a beautiful garden. It settled down on the ground in a sheltered corner, where high hedges grew all round. Nobody could possibly see them there.

"Now, how can we rescue the Princess?" asked Chinky.

"She and I know a song that our pet canary whistles at home," whispered the Prince. "If I whistle it, she will answer if she hears it, and then we shall know where she is."

He pursed up his lips and began to whistle just like a singing canary. It was wonderful to hear him. When he had whistled for half a minute, he stopped and listened

- and, clear as a bird, there came an answering song, just like the voice of a singing canary!

"That's Sylfai!" said Prince Merry joyfully. "Come on

- let's go towards the whistling. It's over there."

He and the others crept round the tall hedge and looked about. Stretching in front of them was a small bluebell wood, and in the midst of it, gathering bluebells, was a dainty little Princess!

"Sylfai!" cried Merry, and ran to her. She hugged him and then looked around her nervously.

"The Green Enchanter is somewhere near," she whispered. "He hardly ever leaves me. How are you going to rescue me, Merry?"

"We have a magic wishing-chair behind the hedge," whispered back Merry. "Come along, Sylfai. Come with me, and with Mollie and Chinky. They are my good friends"

The four hurried out of the wood to the hedge; but when they reached it, they stopped - for they could hear an angry voice shouting loudly:

"Come here, chair, I tell you! Come here!"

"It is the Enchanter, who has found your chair!" whispered Sylfai frightened. "Now what shall we do?"

Mollie and the others peeped through the hedge - and they saw a very strange sight! The Enchanter was trying to catch hold of the chair, and it wouldn't let him! Every time he came near it, the chair spread its red wings and flapped away from him. Then it settled down and waited till the angry Enchanter ran at it again. Once more it spread its wings and dodged away.

And then suddenly a most dreadful and surprising thing happened! The chair, tired of dodging the

Enchanter, suddenly flew straight up into the air, made for the clouds - and disappeared!

"It's gone without us!" said Merry, in dismay. "Whatever shall we do now?"

"Quick!" cried Sylfai, in fright. "The Enchanter will come to look for me, and he'll find you three too. Then he'll make you all prisoners, and it will be dreadful!"

"Where can we hide?" said Mollie, looking round.

"There's an old hollow tree in the wood," said Sylfai, and she ran with them to the middle of the wood. She showed them an enormous oak tree, and in a trice the Prince had climbed half-way up, and was pulling Mollie up. They slipped inside the big hollow, and waited for Chinky to join them. He soon came.

The Prince poked his head out and called to Sylfai:

"Can't you join us, Sylfai?"

"Sh!" said the Princess. "The Enchanter is coming!"

Sure enough, a loud and angry voice came sounding through the wood.

"Sylfai! Where are you, Sylfai! Come here at once!"

"I'll see you when I can!" whispered the Princess. "All right, I'm coming!" she called to the Enchanter, and the three in the tree heard the sound of her feet scampering off.

They looked at one another.

"Whatever are we to do?" groaned Chinky. "I don't see how in the world we are to escape now our chair is gone! We are in a fix!"

## PETER'S OWN ADVENTURE

PETER lay in bed, wishing very much that he could have gone off in the wishing-chair with the others. He dozed for a little while, and then woke up feeling so much better that he decided to get up. He jumped out of bed and ran to the window to see what sort of afternoon it was

And, as he looked out of the window, he saw something that made him stare very hard indeed! He saw something strange flying high up in the sky - not a bird - not an aeroplane - not a balloon! What could it be?

It came down lower - and then Peter saw that it was the magic wishing-chair!

"But it's empty!" said Peter to himself, feeling very much afraid. "Where are the others? Oh dear, I do so hope that the Green Enchanter hasn't caught them! However will they escape, if the wishing-chair has come back without them?"

He dressed quickly, watching the wishing-chair as it came down to earth and flew in at the open door of the playroom at the bottom of the garden.

He slipped downstairs and ran to the playroom. The chair was there, making a curious noise as if it were out of breath!

"Wait a minute, chair, before you make your wings disappear!" cried Peter, flinging himself into the seat. "You must fly back again to Mollie and the others! Do you hear? I don't know where they are - but you must go to them, for they will be in a great fright without you!"

The chair made a grumbling, groaning sort of noise. It was tired and didn't want to fly any more. But Peter thumped the back of it and commanded it to fly.

"Do you hear me, chair? Fly back to Mollie!" he ordered.

The chair flapped its wings more quickly and flew out of the door with a big sigh. It flew steadily upwards, found a rainbow and slid down it, much to Peter's delight. Then it came to the Lost Land, and Peter saw the snowy tops of the mountains sticking up through the clouds, just as the others had done. The chair was very tired as it flew over these mountains, and, to Peter's dismay, it began to fly downwards as if it meant to rest itself on one of the summits.

"You mustn't do that!" cried Peter. "No one is ever found again if they go to the Lost Land."

But the chair took no notice. It flew down to a snowy peak and settled itself there. Almost at once Peter spied some bearded gnomes coming up the mountain towards them, and he knew they were going to catch and keep him and the chair. He jumped off the chair, picked it up, and waved it in the air until it started flapping its wings again. Then the

little boy jumped into it, and up they flew once more, leaving the disappointed gnomes behind them.

"This is my own adventure!" thought Peter. "But it's lonely, having adventures all by myself."

At last he saw the green peak of the Enchanter's high hill poking up through the clouds. Down flew the chair to the castle on the top. It came to rest in the very same place where it had rested before - in the sheltered place between high hedges. Peter jumped off and looked round. He thought it would be a good idea to tie the chair up, as Chinky had once done before - then it couldn't fly away without him. So he tied a string from its leg to the hedge, then left it.

As he was creeping round the hedge he saw a little

figure running nearby. It was the Princess Sylfai, though he did not know it. He gave a low whistle, meaning to ask her if she knew where his friends were. She heard him and looked round. When she saw him, she gave a scream, for she did not know who he was.

"I say! Don't be frightened! Come here!" cried Peter. But she ran away all the faster. So Peter gave chase, thinking that he really must catch her and ask her if she knew where Mollie and the others were. The little fairy raced along, panting, and disappeared into the bluebell wood.

She ran to the hollow tree where Mollie, Prince Merry, and Chinky the Pixie were hiding, and called for help.



"There's an enemy after me!" she panted. Prince Merry heard his sister calling for help, and he at once climbed out of the hollow tree and drew his sword. He

"Kmc I've sot you!" shouted Prince Merry, as Peter ran by the tree.

would kill the enemy!

Sylfai ran to him, and pointed behind her. "He is coming!" she panted. "Hide behind this tree, Merry and jump out at him as he runs by!"

So Merry hid behind the tree, waiting, his sword drawn. Peter came up, panting and puffing, wondering where the little fairy had gone.

"Now I've got you!" shouted Prince Merry in his fiercest voice, as Peter ran by the tree behind which he was hiding. He pounced at the surprised boy with his sword ready to strike - and then stopped in amazement!

"Peter!" he cried. "I nearly wounded you! How did you get here?"

"I came in the wishing-chair!" said Peter. "I saw it come home alone, and I was afraid something had happened to you all. So I made it come back again. I saw this little fairy and wanted to ask her where you all were, but she ran away."

"This is my sister, Princess Sylfai," said Merry, "and this, Sylfai, is Peter. Hi, Mollie and Chinky! Come out! Here's Peter

- and he's got the wishing-chair!"

"What's all this Noise!" an angry voice suddenly shouted.  
"Sylfai! where are you?"

"There's the Green Enchanter!" said Sylfai, in dismay. "What shall we do?"

"Run for the chair!" cried Peter. "Come on!"

All five of them ran out of the wood towards the hedge behind which the chair was tied - but will you believe it, when they crept round the hedge, there was the Enchanter sitting in their chair, a wicked grin on his face, waiting for them to come!

"Peter! Chinky! There's only one thing to do!" whispered Merry desperately. "We'll run at him, tip him off the chair, and, before he knows what is happening, we'll be off into the air. Mollie and Sylfai, keep by us!"

Then, with a loud whoop, Peter, Chinky, and the Prince hurled themselves at the astonished Enchanter, tipped up the chair, and sent him sprawling on his face! The Prince quickly picked up the Enchanter's cloak and wound it tightly two or three times round the angry man's head, so that he could not speak or see!

Whilst the Enchanter was trying to unwrap himself, Mollie and Sylfai squeezed into the chair. Chinky sat on one arm, and Peter sat on the other. Merry cut the rope, and cried, "Home, Chair!"

It rose up swiftly into the air, with Merry guiding it, flying beside it.

"We're safe!" cried Merry. "Thank you, Peter, for daring to come on an adventure by yourself!"

V

## THE OLD, OLD MAN

THE wishing-chair had not grown its wings for a long time. Chinky and the children had become quite tired of waiting for another adventure. Mollie thought perhaps the magic had gone out of it, and it might be just an ordinary chair now. It was most disappointing.

It was a lovely fine day, and Peter wanted to go for a walk. "Come with us, Chinky," he said. "It's no use staying in the playroom with the chair. It won't grow its wings today!"

So Chinky the pixie squashed his pointed ears under one of Peter's old caps, put on an old overcoat of Peter's, and set out with the children. Jane the housemaid saw them going, and she called after them:

"If you're going out, I shall give the playroom a good clean out. It hasn't been done for a long time."

"All right!" called back Mollie. "We won't be home till dinner-time."

They had a lovely walk, and ran back to the playroom about dinner-time. It did look clean. Jane was just finishing the dusting. Chinky waited outside, for he did not want to be seen. But suddenly Peter turned pale, and said, "Oh, where's the chair? Mollie, where's the chair?"

"Oh, do you mean that old chair?" said Jane, gathering up her brushes. "An old, old man came for it. He said it had to be mended, or something. He took it away."

She went up to the house, leaving the two children staring at each other in dismay. Chinky ran in, and how he stared when he heard the news!

"I know who the old man must have been!" he cried. "It's old Bone-Lazy, who lives at the foot of Breezy Hill. He hates walking, so I expect he thought he'd get hold of our wishing-chair if he could. Then he'd be able to go everywhere in it!"

"How can we get it back?" asked Mollie, almost in tears.

"I don't know," said Chinky. "We'll have a try anyhow. Come back here after dinner, and we'll go to his cottage."

So after their dinner the two children ran back to their playroom. They found a most astonishing sight. There was no Chinky there - only an old woman, dressed in a black shawl that was drawn right over her head!

"Who are you?" asked Mollie. Then she gave a cry of surprise - for, when the old woman raised her head, Mollie saw the merry face of Chinky the pixie!

"This disguise is part of my plan for getting back our magic chair," explained Chinky. "Now I want you to go with me to Bone-Lazy's cottage, and I shall pretend to fall down and hurt myself outside. You will run up and help me to my feet - then you will help me to Bone-Lazy's cottage, knock at the door, and explain that I'm an old lady who needs a drink of water and a rest."

"Who are you?" asked Mollie.

"And whilst we're in the cottage we look round to see if our chair is there!" cried Peter. "What a marvellous plan!"

They set off. Chinky took them through a little wood they never seemed to have seen before, and, when they came out on the other side of it, they were in country that looked quite different! The flowers were brighter, the trees were full of blossom, and brilliant birds flew here and there!

"I never knew it was so easy to get to Fairyland!" said Mollie, in surprise.

"It isn't!" said Chinky, with a grin, lifting up his black shawl and peeping at the children merrily. "You couldn't possibly find it unless you had me with you!"

"Is that Bone-Lazy's cottage?" asked Mollie, pointing towards a cottage at the foot of a nearby hill.

Chinky nodded.

"I'll go on ahead now," he said. "Then you must do your part as we have planned. Good luck!"

He hobbled on in front, looking for all the world like an old woman. When he came iust by the cottage, Chinky suddenly gave a dreadful groan, and fell to the ground. At once the children rushed up and pulled the pretended old woman to her feet. From the corner of his eye Peter saw some one looking out of the window of the cottage at them.

"Quick! Quick!" he cried very loudly to Mollie. "This poor woman has fainted! We must take her into this cottage and ask for a drink of water for her. She must rest!"

They half-carried Chinky to the cottage door and knocked loudly. An old, old man opened it. He had narrow cunning eyes and the children didn't like the look of him at all. They explained about the old woman and took her into the cottage. "Could you get a drink of water?" said Mollie.

The old chap left the room, grumbling. "I shall have to go to the well," he muttered crossly.

"Good!" thought Peter. "It will give us time for a look round."

But, to their great disappointment, their wishing-chair was not to be seen! The cottage only had one room, so it did not take them long to hunt all round it. Before they had time to say anything the old, old man came back with a jug of water.

Mollie took it from him - and then she suddenly noticed a very curious thing. A great draught was coming from a big chest-of-drawers standing in a corner. She stared at it in surprise. How could it be making such a wind round her feet? It was only a chest-of-drawers!

But wait a minute! Was it only a chest-of-drawers? Quick as lightning Mollie upset the jug of water, and then turned to Bone-Lazy in apology. "Oh! I'm so sorry! I've upset the water! How very careless of me! I wonder if you'd be good enough to get some more?"

The old man shouted at her rudely, snatched up the jug, and went down the garden to the well. The others stared at Mollie in surprise.

"Whatever did you do that for?" said Peter.

"There's something queer about that chest-of-drawers," said Mollie. "There's a strange wind coming from it. Feel, Chinky! I upset the jug just to get the old

man out of the way for a minute.

"Stars and moon! He's changed our chair into a chest!" cried Chinky. "It must have grown wings, but we can't see them because of Bone-Lazy's magic! Quick, all of you! Jump into a drawer, and I'll wish us away!"

The children pulled open two of the enormous drawers and sat inside. Chinky sat on the top, crying "Home, wishing-chair, home!"

The chest groaned, and the children heard a flapping noise. Just at that moment the old man came into the room again with a jug of water. How he stared! But, before he could do anything, the chest-of-drawers rose up in the air, knocked the water out of his hand, almost pushed him over, and squeezed itself out of the door.

"You won't steal our chair again!" shouted cheeky Chinky, and he flung his black shawl neatly over Bone-Lazy's head.

The chest rose high into the air, and then a funny thing happened. It began to change back into the chair they all knew so well! Before they could think what to do, the children found themselves sitting safely on the seat, for the drawers all vanished into cushions! Chinky was on the top of the back, singing for joy.

"That was a marvellous plan of yours!" said Peter.

"Well, Mollie was the sharpest!" laughed Chinky. "It was she who noticed the draught from the chest. Good old Mollie!"

## TOPSY-TURVY LAND

ONCE the wishing-eair played a very silly trick on Mollie. The children were cross about it for a long time, and so was

Chinky the pixie.

The chair had grown its wings and the children sat on the seat as usual with Chinky on the back.

"Where shall we go?" asked Peter.

"Let's go to Topsy-Turvy Land," said Chinky with a laugh. "It's a funny place to see - everything wrong, you know! It will give us a good laugh!"

"Yes, let's go there!" said Peter, pleased. "It would be fun."

"To Topsy-Turvy Land, chair!" commanded Chinky. The chair rose up in the air and flew off at once. It flapped its wings fast, and very soon the children had flown right over the spires of Fairyland and were gazing down on a strange-looking land.

The chair flew downwards. It came to rest in a village, and the children and Chinky jumped off. They stared in surprise at the people there.

Nobody seemed to know how to dress properly! Coats were on back to front, and even upside down. One little man had his trousers on his arms! He wore his legs through the sleeves of his coat. The children began to

giggle, and the little man looked at them in surprise. "Have you had bad news?" he asked. "Of course not," said Peter.

"We shouldn't laugh if wre

had!"

"You would if you lived in Topsy-Turvy Land," grinned Chinky.

"Look at this woman coming along, crying into her handkerchief. Ask her what's the matter."



"What is the matter?" asked Mollie. The woman mopped her streaming eyes and said, "Oh, I've just found my purse, which I lost, and I'm so glad."

"There you are!" said Chinky. "They cry when they're glad and smile when they're sad!"

"Look at that man over there!" said Mollie suddenly. "He's getting into his house by the window instead of through the door; and do look! his door has lace curtains hung over it. Does he think it's a window?"

"I expect so," said Chinky, with a grin. "Do you see

"What is the matter?" asked Mollie.

that little boy over there with gloves on his feet and shoes on his hands? I must say I wouldn't like to live in Topsy-Turvy Land!"

The children didn't want to live there either - but it really was fun to see all the curious things around them. They saw children trying to read a book backwards. They watched a cat crunching up a bone and a dog lapping milk, so it seemed as if even the animals were topsy-turvy too!

Suddenly a policeman came round the corner, and, as soon as he saw the children and Chinky with their chair, he bustled up to them in a hurry, taking out a notebook as large as an atlas as he did so.

"Where is your licence to keep a chair?" he asked sternly. He took out a rubber and prepared to write with it.

"You can't write with a rubber!" said Mollie.

"I shall write with whatever I please!" said the policeman.

"Yes, and I shall rub out with my pencil if I want to. Now, then, where's your licence?"

"You don't need to have a licence for a chair," said Chinky, impatiently. "Don't be silly. It isn't a motorcar."

"Well, it's got wings, so it must be an aeroplane chair," said the policeman, tapping with his rubber on his enormous notebook. "You have to have a licence for that in this country."

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"We haven't a licence and we're not going to get one," said Peter, and he pushed the policeman's notebook away, for it was sticking into him. The policeman was furious. He glared at Chinky. He glared at Peter. He glared at Mollie - and then he glared at the chair. The chair seemed to feel uncomfortable. It hopped about on the pavement and tried to edge away from the policeman.

"I shall take your chair to prison," said the policeman, and he made a grab at it. The chair hopped away - and then hopped back unexpectedly and trod hard on one of the policeman's feet. Then off it went again. Chinky ran after it.

"Hie, come back, chair!" he yelled. "We can't have you going off like this. Don't be afraid. We won't let the policeman get you! Come on, Mollie and Peter - jump into the chair quickly, and we'll fly off."

Peter ran after the chair - but the policeman caught hold of Mollie's arm. Chinky and Peter jumped into the chair before they saw what was happening to Mollie - and, dear me, before they could get off it again, the chair spread its red wings and rose up into the air!

"Peter! Chinky! Don't leave me here!" shouted Mollie, trying to wriggle away from the policeman.

"Chair, fly down again!" commanded Chinky.

But, do you know, the wishing-chair was so scared of being put into prison that it wouldn't do as it was told! It flew on, straight up into the air with Peter and Chinky, and left poor Mollie behind. Nothing Chinky could say would make that disobedient chair go down again to fetch Mollie. It flew on and on and was soon out of sight.

Mollie was terribly upset. She began to cry, and the policeman stared at her. "What is amusing you?" he asked. "What are you glad about?"

"I'm not amused or glad!" said Mollie. "I'm not like you silly topsy-turvy people, crying when I'm glad, and laughing when I'm sad. I don't belong to this horrid,

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stupid country at all!"

"Dear me, I didn't know that," said the policeman, putting away his notebook. "Why didn't you say so before?"

"You never asked me," said Mollie, half angry, half frightened. "My friend, the pixie who was here just now, will probably tell the pixie King how you kept me here, and he will be very angry indeed."

"Oh, you must go home at once," said the policeman, who was now shaking like a jelly with fright. "You shall catch a bus home. I will pay your fare myself. I will show you where the bus is."

He took Mollie to a stopping-place - but as the buses all went straight on, and passengers had to jump on and off whilst it was going, Mollie thought it was silly to call it a stopping-place! It was a comical-looking bus, too, for although the driver drove it by a wheel, he had a whip by his side and cracked it loudly whenever the bus seemed to slow down, just as if it were a horse!

The policeman put Mollie on the bus as it came past the stopping-place and threw some money at the conductor. He picked it up and threw it back. Mollie thought that the topsy-turvy people were the maddest she had ever seen.

She sat down on a seat. "Standing room only in this bus," said the conductor. "Give me your ticket, please."

"Well, you've got to give me one," said Mollie. "And what do you mean by saying 'standing room only'? There are heaps of seats."

She sat down and the conductor glared at her. "The seats will be worn out if people keep sitting on them," he said. "And where's your ticket, please?"

"I'll show it to you when you give me one," said Mollie, impatiently. "Give me a ticket for home. I live in Hilltown."

"Then you're going the wrong way," said the conductor. "But as a matter of fact no bus goes to Hilltown. So you can stay in my bus if you like. One is as good as another."

Mollie jumped up in a rage. She leapt out of the bus and began to walk back to where she had started from. What a silly place Topsy-Turvy Land was. She would never get home from here!

Just as she got back to the street from which the bus had started, Mollie saw Chinky! How pleased she was. She shouted to him and waved. "Chinky! Chinky! Here I am!"

Chinky saw her and grinned. He came over to her and gave her a hug.

"Sorry to have left you like that, Mollie," he said. "The wishing-chair did behave badly. I've left it at home in the corner! It is very much ashamed of itself."

"Well, if you left the chair at home how did you come here?" asked Mollie in astonishment.

"I borrowed a couple of Farmer Straw's geese," grinned Chinky. "Look! There they are, over there. There's one for you to fly back on and one for me. Come on, or Farmer Straw will miss his fat old geese."

"Chinky, quick! There's that policeman again!" cried Mollie suddenly. "Oh - and he's going to the geese - and getting his big notebook out - I'm sure he's going to ask them for a licence or something! Let's get them, quick!"

Chinky and Mollie raced to where the two geese were staring in great astonishment at the policeman, who was

looking all around them, trying, it seemed, to find their number-plates! Mollie jumped on to the back of one and Chinky on to the other.

"Hie!" cried the policeman, "have these geese got numbers and lamps?"

"I'll go and ask the farmer they belong to!" laughed Chinky. The geese rose up into the air and the wind they made with their big wings blew off the policeman's helmet.

"I'll take your names, I'll take your names!" he yelled in a temper.

He scribbled furiously in his notebook - and Mollie laughed so much that she nearly fell off her goose.

"He doesn't know our names - and he's trying to write

"Hie!" cried the policeman, "have these geese got numbers and lamps?"

with his rubber!" she giggled. "Oh dear! What a topsy-turvy creature!"

Peter was delighted to see Chinky and Mollie again. The two geese took them to the playroom door, cackled good-bye to Chinky, and flew off down to the farm.

The wishing-chair stood in the corner. Its wings had disappeared. It looked very forlorn indeed. It knew it was in

disgrace.

Chinky turned it round the right way again. "We'll forgive you if you'll behave yourself next time!" he said.

The chair creaked loudly. "It's sorry now!" grinned Chinky. "Come on - what about a game of ludo before you have to go in?"

VII

## THE CHAIR RUNS AWAY AGAIN

ONE afternoon Mollie, Peter, and Chinky were in the playroom together, playing at Kings and Queens. They each took it in turn to be a King or a Queen, and they wore the red rug for a cloak, and a cardboard crown covered with gold paper. The wishing-chair was the throne.

It was Peter's turn to be King. He put on the crown and wound the red rug round his shoulders for a cloak.

He did feel grand. He sat down in the wishing-chair and arranged the cloak round him, so that it fell all round the chair and on to the floor too, just like a real king's cloak.

Then Mollie and Chinky had to curtsy and bow to him, and ask for his commands. He could tell them to do anything he liked.

"Your Majesty, what would you have me do today?" asked Mollie, curtsying low.

"I would have you go and pick me six dandelions, six daisies, and six buttercups," said Peter, grandly, waving his hand. Mollie curtsyed again and walked out backwards, nearly falling over a stool as she did so.

Then Chinky asked Peter what he was to do for him. "Your Majesty, what would you have me do?" he said, bowing low.

"I would have you go to the cupboard and get me a green sweet out of the bottle there," said Peter commandingly. Chinky went to the cupboard. He couldn't see the bottle at first. He moved the tins about and hunted for it. He didn't see what was happening behind him!

Peter didn't see either. But what was happening was that the wishing-chair was growing its wings - under the red rug that was all around its legs! Peter sat in the chair, waiting impatiently for his commands to be obeyed - and the chair flapped its red wings under the rug and wondered why it could not flap them as easily as usual!

Mollie was in the garden gathering the flowers that Peter had ordered. Chinky was still hunting for the bottle of sweets. The wishing-chair flapped its wings harder than ever - it suddenly rose into the air, and flew swiftly out of the door before Peter could jump out, and before

Chinky could catch hold of it. It was gone!

"Hie, Mollie, Mollie!" yelled Chinky in alarm.

"The wishing-chair's gone - and Peter's gone with it!"

Mollie came tearing into the playroom. "I saw it!" she panted. "Oh, why didn't Peter or you see that its wings had grown? Now, it's gone off with Peter, and we don't know where!"

"We didn't see its wings growing because the red rug hid its legs!" said Chinky. "It must have grown them under the rug and flown off before any of us guessed!"



"Well, what shall we do?" asked Mollie. "What will happen to Peter?"

"It depends where he's gone," said Chinky. "Did you see which way the chair went?"

"Towards the west," said Mollie. "Peter was yelling and shouting like anything - but he couldn't stop the chair."

"Well, we'd better go on a journey of our own," said Chinky. "I'll catch Farmer Straw's two geese again. They won't like it much - but it can't be helped. We must go after Peter and the chair somehow!"

He ran off down to the farm. Presently Mollie heard the noise of flapping wings, and down from the sky came Chinky, riding on the back of one of the geese, and leading the other by a piece of thick string. The geese hissed angrily as they came to the ground.

"They are most annoyed about it," said Chinky to Mollie. "They only came when I promised them that I wouldn't let Farmer Straw take them to market next week,"

"Ss-ss-ss-ss!" hissed the big geese, and one tried to peck at Mollie's fat legs. Chinky smacked it.

"Behave yourself!" he said. "If you peck Mollie I'll change your beak into a trumpet, and then you'll only be able to toot, not cackle or hiss!"

Mollie laughed. "You do say some funny things, Chinky," she said. She got on to the goose's back. Up in the air it went, flapping its enormous white wings.

"We'll go to the cloud castle first of all," said Chinky. "The fairies there may have seen Peter going by and can tell us where they think the chair might have been going."

at Mollie's fat legs. Clunky smacked it.

So they flew to an enormous white cloud that towered up into the sky. As they drew near it Mollie could see that it had turrets, and was really a cloud castle. She thought it was the loveliest thing she had ever seen.

There was a great gateway in the cloud castle. The geese flew through it and landed in a misty courtyard. Mollie was just going to get off when Chinky shouted to her.

"Don't get off, Mollie - you haven't got cloud-shoes on and you'd fall right through to the earth below!"

Mollie stayed on her goose. Small fairies dressed in all the colours of the rainbow came running into the courtyard, chattering in delight to see Mollie and Chinky. They wore cloud-shoes, rather like big flat snow-shoes, and with these they were able to step safely on the cloud that made their castle.

"Come in and have some lemonade!" cried the little folk. But Chinky shook his head.

"We are looking for a boy in a flying chair," he said. "Have you seen him?"

"Yes!" cried the fairies, crowding round the geese, who cackled and hissed at them. "He passed about fifteen

minutes ago. The chair had red wings and was flying strongly towards the west. Hurry and you may catch it up!"

"Thank you!" cried Chinky. He shook the string reins of his goose, and he and Mollie flew up into the air once more, and went steadily westwards.

"There is a gnome who lives in a tall tower some miles westwards," said Chinky. "It is so tall that it sticks out above the clouds. We will make for there, and see if he has seen anything of Peter and the wishing-chair."

The geese flew on, cackling to one another. They were still in a bad temper. Chinky kept a look out for the tall tower - but Mollie saw it first. It looked very strange. It was sticking right through a big black cloud, and, as it was made of bright silver, it shone brilliantly.

There was a small window at the top. It was open. The geese flew down to the window-sill and Chinky stuck his head inside.

"Hie, gnome of the tower! Are you in?"

"Yes!" yelled a voice. "If that is the baker leave me a brown loaf, please."

"It isn't the baker!" shouted Chinky. "Come on up here!"

"Well, if it's the butcher, leave me a pound of sausages!" yelled the voice.

his silver tower with a big check duster.

"It isn't the butcher!" shouted back Chinky, getting cross. "And it isn't the milkman or the grocer or the newspaper boy or the fishmonger either!"

"And it isn't the postman!" cried Mollie. "It's Chinky and Mollie!"

The gnome was surprised. He climbed up the many steps of his tower till he came to the top. Then he put his head out of the window and gaped in amazement to see Mollie and Chinky on their two geese.

"Hallo!" he said. "Where do yon come from?"

"Never mind that," said Chinky. "We've come to ask you if you've seen a boy on a flying chair."

"Yes," said the gnome at once. "He passed about twenty minutes ago. I thought he was a king or something because he wore a golden crown. He was going towards the land of the Scally-Wags."

"Oh my!" said Chinky in dismay. "Are you sure?"

"Of course I am," said the gnome, nodding his big head. "I thought he was the baker coming at first."

"You think everyone's the baker!" said Chinky, and he jerked the reins of his goose. "Come on, goose! To the land of the Scally-Wags."

The geese flew off. The gnome climbed out on the window-sill and began to polish his silver tower with a big check duster.

"Does he keep that tower polished himself?" said Mollie in surprise. "Goodness, it must keep him busy all the week!"

"It does," said Chinky, grinning. "Because as soon as he's done it all and reached the top, the bottom is dirty again and he has to begin all over again!"

"Chinky, you didn't sound very pleased when you knew that Peter and the chair had gone to the Land of the Scally-Wags," said Mollie. "Why weren't you?"

"Well, the Scally-Wags are horrid people," said Chinky. "You see, to that land go all the bad folk of Fairyland, Goblin-Land, Brownie-Town, Pixie-Land, Gnome-Country, and the rest. They call themselves Scally-Wags, and they are just as horrid as they sound. If Peter goes there he will be treated like a Scally-Wag, and expected to steal and tell fibs and behave very badly. And if he doesn't, they will say he is a spy and lock him up."

"Oh, Chinky, I do think that's horrid," said Mollie in dismay. "Peter will hate being in a land like that."

"Well, don't worry, I dare say we shall be able to rescue him all right," said Chinky - though really he had no idea at all how to save Peter. Chinky himself had never been to the Land of Scally-Wags before!

The geese cackled and hissed. They were getting tired. Chinky hoped they would be able to go on flying till they reached Scally-Wag Land. Mollie leaned over and looked down.

"Look, Chinky," she said. "Is that Scally-Wag Land? Do you see those houses down there - and that funny railway line - and that river with those ships on?"

"Yes," said Chinky, "that must be Scally-Wag Land. Down, geese, and land there!"

The geese flew downwards. They landed by the river, and as soon as Chinky and Mollie had jumped off, the two geese paddled into the water and began to swim. Chinky tied their strings to a post, for he was afraid they might fly off.

A Scally-Wag ran up to him.

"Where do you come from?" he asked. "Are you

Off went the two, running at top speed, with the angry Scally-Wag after them.

messengers from anywhere?"

"No," said Chinky. "We've come to look for some one who came to this land by mistake. We want to take him back."

"No one leaves this land once they are here," said the Scally-Wag. "I believe you are spies!"

"Indeed we are not!" said Mollie. The Scally-Wag drew a whistle from his belt and blew on it loudly. Chinky looked alarmed. He caught hold of Mollie's hand.

"Run!" he said. "If they think we are spies they will lock us up!"

Off went the two, running at top speed, with the angry Scally-Wag after them. They didn't know where they were going! They only knew that they must run and run and run!

## THE LAND OF SCALLY-WAGS

MOLLIE and Chinky ran down the river-path, the Scally-Wag shouting after them.

"Spies!" he called. "Stop them! Spies!" Chinky dragged Mollie on and on. They were both good runners. Another Scally-Wag, hearing the first one shouting, tried to stop Chinky - but the pixie gave him a fierce push and he toppled into the river, splash! How he spluttered and shouted! That gave Chinky an idea.

He squeezed through a hedge and pulled Mollie after him. Then he lay in wait for the shouting Scally-Wag. As soon as he was through the hedge Chinky gave him a push too - and into the river he went, head-first, squealing like a rabbit! Mollie couldn't help laughing, for he seemed all arms and legs. The water wasn't deep, so he couldn't drown - but dear me, how he yelled!

"Come on, Mollie," said Chinky. "We seem to be behaving just as badly as Scally-Wags, pushing people into the river like this!"

They ran on. They seemed to run for miles. They asked every Scally-Wag they met if he had seen a little boy in that land, but nobody had. They all shook their heads and said the same thing.

"There is no little boy in this land."

"Well, it's really very peculiar," said Chinky to Mollie. "He must be .v»/»t'where here!"

"I say, Chinky, I'm getting so hungry," said Mollie. "Aren't you?"

"Yes, very," said Chinky. "Let's knock at this cottage door and see if they will give us something to eat."

So he knocked - rat-a-tat-tat. The door opened and a sharp-eyed little goblin looked out.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"We are hungry," said Mollie. "Could you give us anything to eat?"

"Look!" said the goblin, pointing down the lane to where a baker's cart was standing, full of loaves. "Go and take one of the baker's loaves. He's gossiping somewhere. He won't miss one!"

"But we can't do that!" said Mollie in horror. "That's stealing!"

"Don't be silly," said the goblin, looking at her out of his small, sharp eyes. "You don't mind stealing, do you? I've never met a Scally-Wag who minded stealing yet! Ill steal a loaf for you if you are afraid of being caught!"

He set off towards the cart, keeping close by the hedge so that he wouldn't be seen. Mollie and Chinky stared at one another in dismay.

"Chinky, what horrible people live in this land," said Mollie. "Stop him! We can't let him steal like that. I would never eat



any bread that had been stolen."

"Let's warn the baker," said Chinky. But before they could find him, the goblin had sneaked up to the little cart and had grabbed a new loaf. Then back he scurried to Mollie and Chinky and gave them the loaf, grinning all over his face.

"I'm sorry, but we couldn't have it," said Chinky. "Stealing is wrong."

"Not in Scally-Wag Land," said the goblin, his cunning eyes twinkling.

"It's wrong a/nwhere," said Mollie firmly. "Come on, Chinky. We'll put this loaf back into the cart."

They set off to the cart - but do you know, just as they were putting the loaf back, that horrid little goblin began to shout for all he was worth. "Baker, Baker! Thieves are at your cart! Look out!"

The baker came hurrying out. He caught hold of Chinky and began to shake him. "You bad Scally-Wag!" he cried.

"I'm not a Scally-Wag! I was just putting back a loaf that the goblm stole!" cried Chinky.

"You are a fibber!" said the baker, and he shook Chinky again until his teeth rattled. Mollie ran 10 the rescue. She tried to catch hold of the baker's arm - but he pushed her and sent her flying. She caught at the little cart to try and save herself - and it went over! All the loaves rolled out into the road.

The baker gave a loud yell and ran to his cart. The watching goblin shrieked with delight. Mollie and Chinky ran off as

fast as they could, crying, "We're so sorry! But it was your own fault for not believing us!"

They ran until they came to a field of buttercups. They squeezed through a gap in the hedge, and sat down to get their breath.

"I'm thirsty as well as hungry now," said Mollie. "Where can we get a drink? If we went and asked for a drink of water surely no Scally-Wag would want to steal that for us! Look, there's a cottage over there, Chinky. Let's go and ask."

They went to the cottage, hot and thirsty and tired. A brownie woman came to the door. She was a cross- looking creature.

"I thought you were the milkman," she said.

"No, he's just down the road there," said Chinky, pointing. "Please, Mam, may we have a drink of water."

"I'll get you a drink of milk!" said the woman, and to Chinky's surprise she darted down the road to the milkman's little hand-cart, and turned on the tap of the churn. The milk ran out of the tap on to the road.

"Come on!" said the woman. "Drink this!"

"But we can't do that!" cried Mollie in surprise and disgust. "That's stealing. Oh, do turn off the tap. The milk is all going to waste!"

The milkman could be heard coming down some one's path, whistling. The woman ran back to her house.

leaving the tap turned on. The milkman heard his milk running to waste and ran to turn off the tap, shouting

angrily, "Who did this? Wait till I catch them!"

"They did it, those children did it! I saw them!" cried the brownie woman from her door. The milkman saw Chinky and Mollie standing nearby and made a dart at them. But this time they got away before they were caught. They ran down the lane and darted inside a little dark shed to hide.

"It's too bad," said Mollie. "These Scally-Wags keep doing horrid things and blaming them on to us. I do hate them!"

"Sh!" said Chinky. "There's the milkman coming after us. Cover yourself in this old sack, Mollie, and I'll do the same."

They lay down in a corner, covered with the sacks. The milkman looked into the shed and ran on. Mollie sat up. She looked at Chinky and laughed.

"You do look dirty and hot and untidy," she said.

"So do you," said Chinky. "In fact, we look like proper little Scally-Wags. They all look dirty and untidy too! Now, where shall we go next! If only we could find Peter!"

They went out of the shed. The hot sun shone down on them. They felt thirstier than ever. They saw a little stream running nearby, looking cool and clear.

"What about getting a drink from that?" said Mollie.

"Well, I don't like drinking from streams," Chinky said. "But really, I'm dreadfully thirsty! Let's try it. Bui don't drink too much, Mollie."

The two of them knelt down by the stream, took water into their cupped hands and drank. Ooooh! It was so cold and

delicious. Just as they finished, and were feeling much better, they heard a voice behind them.

"That will be twopence each, please. You have drunk from my stream."

They turned and saw a wizard behind them, in a tall, pointed hat, and cloak embroidered with stars.

"We haven't any money," said Chinky.

"Then you had better come with me and work for me for one day to pay for the drinks you have had," said the wizard. He tried to grab hold of Mollie - but quick as thought Chinky lifted his fist and brought it down on the wizard's pointed hat. It was crushed right down over his long nose, and he couldn't see a thing!

Once more Mollie and Chinky ran. "Oh dear," panted Mollie, "we really are behaving just like Scally-Wags, Chinky - but we can't seem to help it!"

"Look! There's the river again!" said Chinky in delight. "And there are our two geese. Let's get on their backs, Mollie, and go away from this land. I'm sure Peter isn't here. No one seems to have seen him. I'm tired of being here."

"All right," said Mollie. They ran down the river-bank and called to the geese.

"Come here! We want to fly farther on!"

And then, to their great surprise, a witch in a green shawl stood up on the bank and cried, "Hie! Leave my geese alone!"

"They are not yours, they are ours!" yelled Chinky in anger. He cut the string as the geese came swimming to the bank. The witch tried to grab the two big birds - and in a fright they spread their big wings, flew up into the air and away! Mollie and Chinky watched them in the

greatest dismay. Their way of escape had gone!

Chinky was furious with the witch. Before Mollie could stop him he gave her a push, and she went flying into the water. Splash!

"Chinky! You mustn't keep pushing people into the water!" cried Mollie, turning to run away again - but this

time it was too late. The words as she made her way behold, Chinky and Mollie found that they could not move a step!

"So you thought you could push me into the river and run away, did you?" said the witch. "Well, you were mistaken! I shall now take you before our King - and no doubt he will see that you are well punished. March!"

The two found that they could walk - but only where the witch commanded. Very miserable indeed they marched down a long, long road, the witch behind them, and at last came to a small palace. Up the steps they went, and the witch called to the guard there.

"Two prisoners for the King! Make way!"

The guards cried, "Advance!" and the three of them, Mollie, Chinky, and the witch, walked down a great hall. Sitting

witch shouted a few magic out of the river - and lo and

The guards cried, "advance!" and the three of them vealked dozen a great hall.

on a throne at the end, raised high, was the King, wearing a golden crown and a red cloak.

And oh, whatever do you think! Mollie and Chinky could hardly believe their eyes - for the King was no other than Peter - yes, Peter himself! He was still wearing his golden cardboard crown and the red rug for a cloak - and his throne was the wishing-chair. Its wings had disappeared. It looked just like an ordinary chair.

Peter stared at Mollie and Chinky in amazement - and they stared at him. Mollie was just going to cry, "Peter! Oh, Peter!" when Peter winked at her, and Chinky gave her a nudge. She was not to give his secret away!

IX

## THE PRINCE'S SPELLS

FOR a minute or two Peter, Mollie, and Chinky gazed at one another and said nothing. Then the witch spoke.

"Your Majesty, here are two prisoners for you. They pushed me into the river after they had tried to steal my geese."

"Leave them with me," said Peter in a solemn voice. "I will punish them, Witch."

The witch bowed and went out backwards. Mollie wanted to giggle but she didn't dare to. Nobody said a word until the big door closed.

Then Peter leapt down from the chair and flung his arms round Mollie and Chinky. They hugged one another in delight.

"Peter, Peter! Tell us how it is you are King here!" said Mollie.

"Well, it is quite simple," said Peter. "The chair flew off with me as you know. It flew for some time, and then began to go downwards. It landed on the steps of this palace, which had been empty for years."

"As soon as the Scally-Wags saw me, all dressed up in my crown and cloak, sitting on the flying chair, they thought I must be some wonderful magic king come from a far-off land to live here. So they bowed down before me, and called me King. I didn't know what to do because the wishmg-chair's wings disappeared, of course, so I couldn't escape. I just thought I'd better pretend to be a King, and wait for you to come along - for I guessed you and Mollie would find some way of getting to me! Now, tell me your adventures!"

How Peter laughed when he heard what a lot of people Chinky had pushed into the water! "You really are a bit of a Scally-Wag yourself, Chinky," he said. "That's the sort of thing the Scally-Wags love to do!"

"Peter, how can we all escape?" asked Mollie. "If only the wishing-chair would grow its wings again! But it never does when we really want it to!"

"What will Mother say if we stay away too long?" said Peter, looking worried.

"Well, a day here is only an hour in your land," said Chinky. "So don't worry. Even if we have to be here for two or three days it won't matter, because it will only be two or three hours really. Your mother won't worry if you

are only away for a few hours."

"And by that time perhaps the chair will have grown its wings again," said Mollie, cheering up.

"Look here," said Chinky, "I think you ought to make up some sort of punishment for us, Peter, or the witch will think there is something funny about you. Make us scrub the floor, or something. Anything will do."

"But do give us something to eat," said Mollie. "We really are very hungry."

Peter clapped his hands. The door swung open and two soldiers appeared. They saluted and clicked their heels together.

"Bring me a tray of chocolate cakes, some apples, and some sardine sandwiches," commanded Peter. "And some lemonade, too. Oh, and bring two pails of hot water and two scrubbing-brushes. I am going to make my two prisoners scrub the floor."

The guards saluted and went out. In a few minutes two Scally-Wags, dressed in footmen's uniform, came in with the tray of food. How good it looked! Behind them followed another Scally-Wag carrying two pails of steaming hot water, two scrubbing-brushes, and some soap.

"Your Majesty, is it safe for you to be alone with two prisoners as fierce as these?" asked one of the Scally-Wags.



"Dear me, yes," said Peter. "I would turn them both into black-beetles if they so much as frowned at me!"

The Scally-Wags bowed and went out. Mollie and Chinky giggled. "Do you like playing at being a King Peter?" asked Mollie.

"I'm not playing at it, I am a King!" said Peter. "Come and help yourselves to food, you two. I'll have some too. It looks good."

It was good! But in the middle of the meal there came a loud knock at the door. Mollie and Chinky flung down their sandwiches in a hurry, caught up scrubbing-brushes and went down on their hands and knees! They pretended to be hard at work scrubbing as three Scally-Wags entered with a message.

"Your Majesty!" they said, bowing low till their foreheads bumped against the floor. "His Highness, the

Mollie and Chinky pretended to be hard at work scrubbing.

Prince of Goodness Knows Where, is coming to see you tomorrow, to exchange magic spells. He will be here at eleven o'clock."

"Oh," said Peter. "Thanks very much." The three Scally-Wags looked angrily at Mollie and Chinky scrubbing the floor, and said, "Shall we beat these prisoners for you, Your Majesty? We hear that they have pushed three people into the river, and smashed

down the old wizard's hat on to his nose, and . . ."

"That's enough," said Peter in a fierce voice. "I punish my prisoners myself. Any interference from you, and you will scrub my floor too!"

"Pardon, pardon, Your Majesty!" cried the three Scally-Wags, and they backed away so fast that they fell over one another and rolled down the steps. The two children and Chinky laughed till their sides ached.

"Oh, Peter, you do make a good King!" said Mollie. "I do wish I could be a queen!"

"I say! What about this Prince of Goodness Knows Where," said Chinky. "If he is really coming to exchange magic spells with you, Peter, you will find things rather difficult. Because, you see, you can't do any spells at all."

The three stared at one another. Then Peter had an idea.

"Look here, Chinky, couldn't you change places with me tomorrow, and do spells instead of me?" he asked. "I'll say that I will receive the Prince alone - so that none of the Scally-Wags will know it's you and not me."

the golden cardboard cro:cn.

"Good idea!1' cried Chinky at once. "I don't know anything about the Prince, but perhaps I can manage to satisfy him. That's just what we'll do - change places!"

That night Mollie and Chinky slept in the kitchen of the palace. They were quite comfortable on a big sofa there, though the two kitchen cats would keep on lying down on top of them. They were nice, warm cats, but very fat and heavy. Peter slept on a golden bed in a big bedroom but he said he would much rather have slept with Molly and Chinky on the kitchen sofa with the cats. It was lonely in the golden bed.

Peter told the soldiers that he meant to keep the two prisoners, Mollie and Chinky, as personal servants, and therefore they were to bring him in his breakfast. You may be sure that the two of them piled the trays up well with food of all kinds when they took the breakfast in! They laid it on a table, and then they all ate a good meal, though Mollie and Chinky had to eat theirs standing behind Peter's chair, in case some one came in suddenly.

As the morning went on and the time came nearer for the Prince to come, the three began to feel rather excited. Peter gave orders that he was to be alone with the Prince.

"See that no one comes into the room whilst His Highness is here," he said to the soldiers. They saluted and went out smartly. Peter said it was fun to have two soldiers obeying him like that.

"Now here's the crown, Chinky," he said, handing him the golden cardboard crown. "And here's the red rug for a cloak. Get on to the wishing-chair throne. I guess the old wishing-chair never thought it was going to be used as a throne!"

Chinky put on the crown and sat down on the chair, pulling his cloak round him. Mollie and Peter stood behind him as if they were servants. Eleven o'clock struck.

The door was thrown open and in came a tall and grandly dressed Prince. He swept off his feathered hat and bowed to Chinky. Chinky bowed back. The door shut.

Chinky and the Prince began to talk.

"I was on my way through your kingdom," said the Prince, "and thought that I would come to exchange spells with you. I have here a spell that will change all the weeds in a garden into beautiful flowers. Would you care to exchange that for a spell of your own?"

"No, thank you," said Chinky. "I have no weeds in my garden. It would be of no use to me."

"Well," said the Prince, bringing out a bag embroidered with little golden suns, "here is another spell, really most useful. Put a bit of the shell in this bag into an egg-cup and say 'Toorisimmer-joo-joo,' and you will see a beautiful new-laid egg appear. You can have it for your breakfast. There is enough shell in here to make one hundred thousand eggs."

"I can't bear eggs for breakfast," said Chinky. "Show me something else."

"Well, what about this," said the Prince. He showed Chinky a strange little cap with three red berries on it. "Put this cap on and you will know immediately who are your enemies and who are not, for the three red berries will wag about when enemies are before you."

"I know who are my enemies and who are not without wearing any cap," said Chinky. "It 's no good to nic\ You

have no spells at all that are of any use, Prince!"

"Well, what spells have you?" asked the Prince rather impatiently.

Chinky waved his hand in the air and a most delicious smell stole all around. It seemed like honeysuckle one minute - like roses the next - like carnations the next - then like sweet-peas - so that all the time you were sniffing and smelling in delight. The Prince was most excited.

"That is a most unusual spell," he said. "I should like that to take home to my Princess. She would be pleased."

"Well, I will give it to you if you will give me a spell that is useful to me," said Chinky. "Can you, for instance, make wings grow on this throne of mine?"

The Prince looked at the wishing-chair and rubbed his hand down its legs.

"Yes," he said at once. "I can easily do that. If I am not mistaken that throne of yours was once a flying chair! I will work the flying spell on it!"

He took from his pocket a little blue tin. He took off the lid and dug his finger into the tin. Mollie saw that his finger was covered with green and yellow ointment. The Prince smeared it down the legs of the chair. Then he stood back and chanted a curious magic song. The children and Chinky watched in excitement. They saw the familiar red buds come - and break out into feathers! The chair was growing its wings! It spread them out - it flapped them and a draught came!

"Quick!" shouted Chinky, jumping on to the top of the chair's back, "get in, Mollie and Peter. We can fly off, now!"

But the Prince gave a shout and snatched Chinky's

cardboard crown from his head.

"You are not a real king!" he cried. "Your crown is only cardboard! Stop! Soldiers, soldiers! Come here at once!"

The big door burst open. In came the soldiers and stared in amazement at the chair holding the two children and the pixie.

"Home, chair, home!" yelled all three in the chair. "Fly out of the window!"

The chair rose into the air, kicked out at the Prince, and knocked him over. Peter kicked out at the soldiers and knocked their helmets off! The chair flew out of the window and up into the air. Hurrah! They were leaving the Land of the Scally-Wags - and a good thing too; for, as Peter said, they stood a good chance of becoming as bad as Scally-Wags themselves if they stayed there very much longer - pushing people into rivers, kicking them over, and banging their hats over their noses!

"But I quite enjoyed being a bit of a Scally-Wag for once," said Chinky, as the chair flew in at the playroom.

"It was a good thing for me that we had been playing at Kings and Queens before the chair flew to the Land of Scally-Wags," said Peter. "It was jolly nice every one thinking I was a king, I can tell you!"

## THE LAST ADVENTURE OF ALL

CHINKY was reading by himself in the playroom, curled up on the couch. He was waiting for Mollie and Peter to come and play with him. They were going to set out the railway lines all over the room, and run the two engines round and round. It would be fun, Chinky

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He listened for the two children to come along. Soon he heard them. But they were not running merrily along as usual. They were coming slowly. Chinky wondered if anything had happened. Usually the children only walked slowly if they had been in disgrace, or were sad

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curled up oil flic couch.

about something. He ran to the door and looked out.

Yes - it zcas Mollie and Peter - but they did look miserable. Chinky ran to them and took their hands.

"What's the matter?" he cried. "Have you been punished for something?"

"No," said Peter. "But Mother has just told us some bad news."

"What?" cried Chinky.

"She has told us that Mollie and I are to go away to school," said Peter.

"But you go to school now," said Chinky, puzzled. "You like school."

"Yes, but this is a new school - it is called a boarding-school," said Mollie. "We go there and live there - sleep there, have our meals there, and every-thing! We shan't be able to pop down to our playroom and play with you, Chinky."

The pixie stared at the two children in dismay. "But won't you ever come back again?" he asked. "Won't you ever see your mother and father even?"

Peter laughed. "Oh, yes," he said. "We shall see them often. We shall come home for holidays and at half-term too. So it isn't really so bad, I suppose. But it means we shan't be able to see you every day as we do now, Chinky. You will have to wait many weeks before we come back again."

"Oh dear!" said Chinky. "I do hate the idea of that! But perhaps it will be a good thing; because, you know, my mother is rather lonely living by herself in Fairyland. I ought to go and live with her a bit. Then I could come and live with you in the holidays, couldn't I?"

"Yes." said Peter. "But I say, Chinky what about the wishing-chair? We can't leave it here by itself. It might fly away and not come back."

"Or get stolen by someone," said Mollie.

"Yes, that's true," said Chinky. "Well, I think I'd better take it home with me, don't you? My mother will keep it safely for us till we need it. We will see that it doesn't fly off.""

"That's a good idea," said Peter.

"When are you going to school?" asked Chinky.



"Tomorrow," said Mollie. "I am going to a girls' school and Peter is going to a boys' school. We shall miss one another dreadfully. But I expect it will be fun to live with lots of other children."

"Perhaps the wishing-chair will grow its wings once more before we have to say good-bye to it," said Peter. "But anyway, we'll go off adventuring in the holidays when they come. And, oh, Chinky! I suppose you couldn't come in the chair to school one night? It would be so exciting!"

"I'll see," said Chinky. "I don't want the other children to know about the wishing-chair - and they would see it if I came."

"Look!" said Mollie suddenly. "The chair is growing its wings! It must have heard what we were saying. It wants to take us on a last adventure. Come on, you two, get in!"

Chinky sat in his usual place, on the back of the chair. Mollie and Peter squeezed into the seat. The chair flapped its wings strongly and flew off into the air. Up it flew and up, and went due south.

"We haven't been this way before," said Chinky, peering down. "We pass over some strange lands hereabouts, I know. Chair, you are not to go down anywhere here. We might find it difficult to get away."

The chair obeyed Chinky. It flew on, keeping quite high. The children leaned over the arms to see what they were passing. They saw that they must be flying over Giantland, for the people looked very big and tall. Some of the giants saw them and waved to them to come down. But the chair flew on. It came to yet another land.

This was a peculiar-looking place. The people seemed to have no legs, but rolled about here and there on their round, fat little bodies.

"That's the land of Rollabouts," said Chinky, pointing. "I once went there when I was little, and dear me, how I kept falling over those Rollabouts. They will keep rolling in between your feet!"

Mollie laughed. She thought she would like to fly down and see the Rollabouts - but the chair kept on, flying strongly.

"Now what is this land, I wonder?" said Chinky, looking down. "Oh, my word! I know! It's where the Chatterboxes live! Dreadful people, they are! They talk all the time, and simply won't let you get a word in!"

"I don't like chatterboxes," said Peter. "They are dull and tiresome, and just talk about themselves all the time. Oh, I say, Chinky! The chair's going down!"

"Keep up, chair!" commanded Chinky. The chair swung itself upwards. But the Chatterboxes had seen it and they called to it.

"Hie, chair, chair, chair! Come on down here! We've lots to say to you, and we'd like to hear all your adventures, and see your wonderful wings, and . . ."

"And, and, and!" said Chinky. "They'll go on talking for ever!"

ie (jii'ai'lvbux begun to haul on the rope.

The Chatterboxes grew angry when they saw that the chair was not coming down. One of them ran indoors and fetched a long rope. He rolled it round in rings on his arm. Then, taking careful aim, he threw it up at the chair, as a cowboy throws a lasso. The loop of rope fell right | round the chair. The Chatterbox gave a yell of delight. He pulled the rope tightly. Chinky and the children were caught neatly, for the rope was round them, too!

The Chatterbox began to haul on the rope, and although the chair flapped its wings as hard as it could and tried to fly upwards, there was no help for it - it had to come down!

Bump! It was down on the ground.

The Chatterboxes undid

the rope, talking all the time. "You should have

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come down when we called you! You see, you had to come down anyhow! Where were you going to? Where did you come from? What are your names?"

"My name is Chinky," began the pixie - but the Chatterboxes did not want to listen to anything. They just went on talking, all of them at once.

"They sound like the monkey-house at the Zoo!" said Peter in despair.

"Listen, Chatter-boxes! Let us go on our journey!"

Peter shouted as loudly as he could - but the Chatterboxes took no notice. They pulled the two children and Chinky along to a little cottage, saying, "You must come and have some lemonade! You must have some biscuits!"

"Oh, well," said Peter to Mollie. "I can always do with lemonade and biscuits. I don't like leaving the chair behind, though. I say, Chatterboxes, can we bring the chair with us?"

"Oh yes, we will send some one back to fetch it," said the little folk. "You go, Lollipop! You go, Twisty! You go, Knobbly!"

Lollipop, Twisty, and Knobbly all began to tell why they didn't want to go - and in the end nobody went at all. They were most annoying little people, all talk and nothing else!

They sat down in the little kitchen, and went on talking, whilst the children and Chinky waited patiently for the lemonade and biscuits. But every one wanted to talk, and no one fetched anything to eat or drink.

"You know, when we saw your chair we thought 'What a wonderful thing!' And we did want to see it and see you too, so we called you, but you wouldn't come down, and then we had to lasso you, and you came down, and what nice people you are, and we are so pleased to have you here, and to give you lemonade and biscuits, and to be your friends, and listen to all you have to tell us of your wonderful adventures, and . . ."

"Oh, do be quiet for a minute," said Mollie, putting her hands over her ears. "You go on and on and on."

"And what about some lemonade and biscuits," said Chinky.

"Oh yes, lemonade and biscuits, of course you shall have some, and we will all have some, too!" cried the Chatterboxes. "How nice it is to have you here eating and drinking with us, and telling us all your adventures, and sharing your wonderful journeys, and . . ."

"Well, we haven't told you ANYTHING SO far!" said Peter, getting annoyed. "I say, Chinky, let's get back to our chair. I'm tired of waiting here for lemonade and biscuits that don't come!"

They pushed aside the silly little Chatterboxes and went to get their chair - but it was gone! They saw it high in the sky, a little black speck, flying away to the north!

"Bother!" said Chinky crossly. "Now we've got to go back by train! Do get away, Chatterboxes, and don't talk so loudly in my ears all the time. You make me quite deaf!"

"Hurry!" called Mollie. "There's a train over there in that station!" The three ran fast, with the stupid Chatterboxes chattering hard behind them all the time, saying something about lemonade and biscuits!

They jumped into the train, and only just in time too!

It was a funny train - a wooden one, with open trucks. In Chinky's carriage there was a hedgehog, a Chatterbox, and a mole who was fast asleep.

The Chatterbox was talking as usual. The hedgehog spread out his prickles and pricked him. The Chatterbox looked at him angrily.

"Every time you open your mouth I shall prick you," said the hedgehog in a hoarse, cross voice. The Chatterbox glared at him, but didn't dare to say another word.

"It's a pity that a hedgehog doesn't travel with every Chatterbox," whispered Mollie to Chinky. The train clattered on, and stopped at funny stations. The Chatterbox waited until the hedgehog got out and then began rattling on about all sorts of things, never stopping for a moment. The mole snored loudly. Chinky, Mollie, and Peter turned their backs on the silly Chatterbox and

The hedgehog spread out his prickles and pricked the (Chatterbox.

pretended not to listen. How glad they were to get to their own station and jump out.

"Well, I hope I shall never be a chatterbox!" said Mollie.

"We won't let you be!" said Peter. "Come on - let's go home and see if the wishing-chair is safely back."

They ran through the wood and down the lane and into their garden. But do you know, the wishing-chair was not there! It hadn't come back!

"Oh, do you suppose it has gone away for ever?" cried Mollie. "Do you think it heard what we were saying and ran away?"

"It's funny," said Chinky, puzzled. "I shouldn't have thought it would leave us like that! Oh dear - and you're going away to school tomorrow! It might have let you say good-bye to it!"

Just then a tiny fairy came knocking at the playroom door with a note for Chinky. He opened it and read it - and his face broke into smiles. "Just listen to this!" he cried. "It's from my mother. She says: 'Dear Chinky, this is just to let you know that the wishing-chair arrived here by itself today. I don't know why. - Your loving Mother.' "

"Oh, the clever old chair!" said Peter. "It heard us say that you would live with your mother and keep it there - so it has gone there itself! Well, you must say good-bye to it for us, Chinky - and we'll hope to see it when we come home for half-term."

A bell rang at the top of the garden. Mollie ran to Chinky and hugged him. "That's the bell to tell us to go in," she said. "We'd better say good-bye now, dear, dear Chinky, in case we can't get down to the playroom

tomorrow before we go. Good-bye and don't forget us!"

They all hugged one another. Chinky waved to them as they ran up the garden. He felt rather sad - but never mind, there would be more adventures when the holidays came! He would wait for those.

Chinky caught the bus to Fairyland and went to Mrs. Twinkle, his mother! The children packed their last things. Everything was ready for school. They couldn't help feeling rather excited.

The playroom was empty. The wishing-chair was gone. Ah - but wait till the holidays! What fine adventures they would all have then!

HOME FOR HALF-TERM

A LITTLE pixie peeped anxiously into the window of a small playroom built at the bottom of a garden. A robin flew down beside him and sang a little song.

"What's the matter, Chinky? What do you want? What are you looking for?"

"I'm looking for Mollie and Peter," said Chinky. "I've got the wishmg-chair hidden under a bush just near here, and I'm waiting for the children to come home, so that I can get into this playroom of theirs and put the chair safely in its corner."

"But you know that the children are away at boarding-school," said the robin, with a little trill. "How foolish you are!"

"I'm not" said Chinky. "They're coming home at half- term, just for a few days. They told me so - and I promised to bring the chair from my mother's, where I've been looking after it - hoping that perhaps it would grow its wings just for their half-term. So I'm not foolish, you see!"

"Sorry," said the robin. "Shall I go and find out if they are up at the house? I haven't heard them yet and usually they make a lot of noise when they come home. Wait here, and I'll find out."

He flew off. He peeped into all the windows, his perkv

"What are you looking for, Chinky?" asked the robin.

little head on one side. There was nobody to be seen at all except the cook in the kitchen. She was busy making cakes.

"Ah - the children's favourite chocolate buns!" thought the robin. "I can hear them now, banging at the front door. What a pity their mother isn't here to welcome them!"



Mrs. Williams, the cook, hurried to the front door. Two children burst in at once, each carrying a small case. It was Mollie and Peter, home for the half-term!

"Hallo, Mrs. Willy! Where's Mother?" cried Peter.

"Welcome home, Master Peter," said Mrs. Williams, "and you, too, Miss Mollie. Your mother says she's very,

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very sorry, but she's had to go off to your Granny, who's been taken ill. But she'll be home before you have to go back to school on Tuesday - and I'm to look after you."

"Oh," said the children, disappointed. Home didn't somehow seem like home without Mother there. They felt rather miserable.

"What about Daddy?" asked Mollie.

"He's away," said Mrs. Williams. "Didn't your mother tell you that in her last letter?"

"Oh, yes," said Mollie, remembering. "I forgot. Oh dear - half-term without either Mother or Daddy - how horrid!"

"I've made you your favourite chocolate buns," said Mrs. Williams, following them indoors. "And I've got ice-cream for you, too, and honey in the comb. And your mother says she has ordered twenty-four bottles of ginger-beer and orangeade for you this weekend, and you can take it down to your playroom."

"Oh, well - that sounds good," said Peter, cheering up. "We'll just pop upstairs with our things, Mrs. Willy - and then what about your honey in the comb and chocolate buns? We're

starving! We simply never get enough to eat at school, you know!"

"Rubbish!" said Mrs. Williams. "You're both as plump as can be!"

The two children went up the stairs two at a time. They stood at a landing window, looking down to the bottom of the garden. They could quite well see the roof of their playroom there. They looked at each other in excitement.

"I hope Chinky is there," said Mollie. "Because if he is, and has got the Wishmg-Chair with him, we shall be

able to fly off on an adventure or two without bothering

about anyone! It's always difficult to slip off in it when

Mother and Daddy are at home - and we just have to

keep the chair a secret. It would be too dreadful if it was

put into a museum, and

taken right away from us. It

must be very, very

valuable."

"Yes. We're really very

lucky to have a wishing-

chair of our own," said

Peter. "It's a long time since  
we got it now. Come on -  
let's put our things in our  
bedrooms, and then ask  
Mrs. Willy to let us take our  
tea down to the playroom.  
Perhaps Chinky is there."

"He may be waiting  
outside," said Mollie. "He  
can't get in because the  
door is locked. I shall love to  
see his dear little pixie face  
again. We're lucky to have a  
pixie for a friend!"

Mrs. Willy was quite  
pleased to let them have a  
tray of goodies to take down  
to the playroom with them.  
She piled it with buns and

„ ..... , new bread and butter, and a

Mrs. Hittv gave me a tray .

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biscuits, and ice-cream out of the fridge. It did look good!

"I'll take some ginger-beer down under my arm," said Peter.  
"I can manage the tray, too, if you'll bring the biscuits and ice-cream - they look as if they might slip about!"

"I'll get the key of the playroom, too," said Mollie, and she took it off its hook. Then, feeling excited, the two of them went carefully down the garden path, carrying everything between them. Would Chinky be waiting for them?

He was, of course, because the robin had flown down to tell him that the children were coming. He hid behind some tall hollyhocks, and leapt out on them as they came up to the door of the playroom.

"Mollie! Peter! I'm here!"

"Chinky! We are glad to see you!" said Mollie. "Wait till I put down all this stuff and I'll give you a hug! There!"

She gave the little pixie such a hug that he almost choked. He beamed all over his face. "Where's the key?" he said. "I'll open the door. I want to get the wishing- chair inside before anyone sees it. There's a tiresome little brownie who keeps on wanting to sit in it."

He unlocked the door of the playroom and they all went in. Chinky helped them with the food, and then ran to get the wishing-chair. He staggered in with it, beaming.

"I tipped that tiresome brownie off the seat, and he fell into some nettles," said Chinky. "He shouted like anything. Well, does the chair look just the same as ever?"

"Oh, vt'x!" said Mollie, in delight, looking at the polished wooden chair. "Your mother does keep it well polished, Chinky. Did it grow its wings and tlv off at all, while we were away at school this term?"

"It grew its wings once," said Chinky, "but as I was in bed with a cold I couldn't fly off anywhere exciting in it - so I tied it to one of the legs of my bed, in case it tried to do anything silly, like flying out of the window."

Mollie giggled. "And did it try?" she asked.

"Oh, yes - it woke me up in the middle of the night, flapping its wings and tugging at my bed," said Chinky with a grin. "But it couldn't get away, and in the morning its wings had gone again. So that was all right."

"I do so hope it will grow its wings this weekend," said Peter. "We've only got a few days' holiday, then we go back to school again - and as Mother and Daddy are both away we really could go off on an adventure or two without any difficulty."

"I expect it will," said Chinky, looking at the chair. He felt its legs to see if there were any bumps coming, which meant that its wings were sprouting. But he couldn't feel any. What a pity!

Soon they were all sitting down enjoying Mrs. Williams's buns and ice-cream. It was a hot day, so they drank rather a lot of the ginger-beer.

"It won't last long if we drink it at this rate!" said Peter. "I say - I wonder if Mrs. Willy would mind if we lived down here in the playroom all this weekend - slept here, too?"

"That would be fun!" said Mollie. "I don't see why we shouldn't. You could come too, Chinky."

It was very easy to arrange. Mrs. Williams smiled and nodded. "Yes, you do that," she said. "Your mother said I was to let you do what you liked, so long as it wasn't anything silly. I'll take down bedding for you."

"Oh, no," said Peter, hurriedly. "We'll take it all down, Mrs. Willy." He didn't want any questions about the wishing-chair! "And Mrs. Willy, we could have all our meals down there, if you like. We don't want anything hot, you know, this weather. If you could give us some tins and a bottle of milk, we could pick our own fruit and salad out of the garden. We shouldn't be any bother to you at all then."

"You're no bother!" said Mrs. Williams. "But you do just what you like this weekend, so long as you're good and happy. I'll give you tins and milk and anything else you want - and don't be afraid I'll come bothering you, because I won't! I know how children like to have their own little secrets, and I shan't come snooping round!"

Well, that was grand! Now they could go and live in the playroom, and sleep there, too - and if the wishing-chair grew its wings at any time, they would know at once! They would hear it beginning to creak, and see the bumps growing on its legs and the wings sprouting. Not a minute would be wasted!

It was fun taking down everything to the gay little playroom. Chinky kept out of sight, of course, because nobody knew

anything about him. He was as much of a secret as the wishing-chair!

"There now," said Mollie, at last. "Everything is ready for us - food - drink, too bedding - and a cushion and rug for you, Chinky. We're going to have a lovely time! Wishing-chair, grow your wings as soon as you can, and everything will be perfect!"

" Wishing-chair, grow your wings as soon as you can," said Mollie.

The wishing-chair gave the tiniest little cree-ee-eak. "Did you hear that?" said Chinky. "Perhaps it will grow its wings soon. We'll have to keep a watch. Where shall we go to, if it does grow its wings?"

"Is there a Land of Lost Things, or something like that?" said Peter. "I got into awful trouble this term because I lost my watch. Or what about going to a Land of Circuses or Fairs? I'd love to see a whole lot of those at once."

"I never heard of those lands," said Chinky. "Why don't we just let the chair take us somewhere on its own? It would be fun not to know where we are going!"

"Oooh, yes," said Peter. "That would be really exciting. Chair, do you hear us? Grow your wyings and you can take us anywhere you like. But do, do hurry upr

CREE-EE-EAK

MOLLIE and Peter spent a very jolly evening with Chinky, down in the playroom. They played snap and happy families and ludo, and all the time they watched the wishing-chair to see if it would grow its wings. They did so long to fly off on an adventure again.

Mollie, Peter and Chinky spent a jolly evening playing snap.

But the chair stood there quietly, and when it was half- past eight the children were so sleepy that they felt they really must go to bed.

"We'd better go and have a bath up at the house," said Peter. "I feel dirty, travelling all the way home by train. We'll dress properly again, just in case the wishing-chair grows its wings and flies off with us. We'll say good-night to Mrs. Willy, too, so that she doesn't feel she's got to come down to see if we're all right."

Just as they went out of the door they saw somebody disappearing round the corner. "Who was that peeping?" said Mollie at once. "Quick, run and see, Peter."

Peter raced round the corner of the playroom and saw a little brownie dive into a bush. He yelled at him.

"Hey, what do you think you are doing, peeping about here? You wait till I catch you!"

A cheeky face looked out of the bush. "I just want to see your chair grow wings, that's all. It's a wishing-chair, isn't it? Can't I watch it grow wings?"

"No, you can't," said Peter. "No peeping and prying in our garden, please! Keep out!"

The brownie made a rude face and pulled his head back into the leaves. Chinky ran out of the playroom to see what the shouting was about.



"It's that brownie you told us about, the one who sat in the wishing-chair," said Peter. "Keep an eye open for him, Chinky. We don't want him telling everyone our secret."

"I'll watch," said Chinky. He yelled at the bush where the brownie had gone.

"Hey, you little snooper! If I see you again I'll tie you to a witch's broomstick and send you off to the moon!"

There was no answer. The children went off to the house to have their bath and Chinky went back to the playroom.

Mrs. Willy gave Peter and Mollie a jam sponge sandwich she had made, and another bottle of milk. "Could you give us some eggs, too?" asked Peter. "Then we could boil them ourselves for breakfast on our own little stove. We wouldn't need to come in for breakfast then."

Mrs. Willy laughed. "You're not going to bother me much, are you?" she said. "Well, here you are, four new-laid eggs - and you'd better take a new loaf down with you, and some more butter. You're sure you'll be all right?"

"Oh, yes" said Mollie. "We love being on our own like this with Ch—"

Peter gave her such a nudge that she almost fell over. She stopped and went red. Goodness gracious, she had almost said Chinky's name! Mrs. Williams didn't seem to have noticed anything, though. She added a pot of marmalade to the trav, and Peter took it.

"Well, I suppose I'll see you when you want more food!" she said. "And not before. Have a nice time - and don't get into mischief!"

Peter and Mollie went down the garden path with the tray. Good! Now they wouldn't need to go up to the house for breakfast, so if the chair grew its wings that night they would have time for a nice long adventure!

Just as they got near the playroom they heard a noise of shouting and slapping.

"I told you I'd smack you if I found you peeping again!" they heard Chinky say. "Coming right into the playroom like that!" Slap, slap, slap! "Howl all you like, you'll get a worse smacking if you come back again. What's up with you that you won't do as you're told?"

"You horrid thing!" wept the little brownie. "Your hand's very hard. You hurt me. I'll pay you out, yes, I will!"

Slap! Yell! Howl! Then came the sound of running feet and the little brownie almost bumped into the two children. He knocked the tray and an egg leaped right off it and landed on his head. It broke, and in an instant he had a cap of yellow yolk!

Mollie and Peter laughed. The little brownie couldn't think what had happened to him. "I'll pay you out," he cried. "I will, I will!"

He disappeared into the tall hollyhocks, grumbling and wailing. Dear, dear - what a silly little fellow he was, to be sure!

The little brownie knocked the tray and an egg fell on to his head.

"Well, he's gone," said Peter. "And so is one of our eggs. Never mind, we've still got three left, one for each of us. Hey, Chinky, you've been having more trouble with that brownie, I see."

"Yes. But I don't think he'll be back again in a hurry," said Chinky. "I smacked him hard. I know who he is now. He's little Nose-About, a spoilt little brownie who sticks his nose into everything. His mother didn't spank him enough when he was little, so people have to keep on spanking him now. I say - what a lovely sponge sandwich! Are we going to have some now?"

They sat down to have their supper. It was a lovely summer's evening, still quite light. As they sat by the doorway, munching big slices of jam sandwich, a purple cloud blew up. Big drops of rain fell, and yet the sun still shone brightly, for it was not covered by the cloud.

"There's a rainbow, look!" said Mollie, and they all gazed at the lovely, shimmering rainbow that suddenly shone out in the sky. "I do wish the chair would grow its wings, because I'd love to go to the rainbow and see if I could find a crock of gold where it touches the ground."

"Yes, I'd like that, too," said Chinky. "I don't believe anyone has ever found the crock of gold yet. They say you have to slide right down the rainbow itself and land with a bump on the patch of ground where the crock is hidden."

"Let's go right into the garden and see if we can spot where the rainbow-end touches," said Mollie. So out they went, but as the end of the rainbow disappeared behind some high trees they couldn't make up their minds where it touched.

"It's miles away, anyhow," said Peter. "Isn't it a lovely

thing? It's like a bridge of many colours."

They heard a sudden little scuffling sound and turned quickly. "Was that that tiresome brownie again?" said Chinky, frowning. "Anybody see him?"

Nobody had. Nobody had spied him scuttling into the playroom. Nobody saw where he went. Peter felt uneasy. "I believe he's slipped into the playroom," he said. "We'd better look."

They went in and hunted round. They looked into every corner, and Mollie even looked inside the dolls' house because she thought he might have been able to squeeze himself in at the door.

"He's not in the playroom," said Peter at last. "We've looked simply everywhere. Let's shut the door now, and keep him out. It's still very light, and the rainbow is still lovely, though not so bright as it was. We'd better go to bed. I'm really sleepy."

Mollie looked longingly at the wishing-chair. "If only it would grow its wings!" she said. "I just feel like an adventure!"

The two children had mattresses to lie on. Chinky had a cushion and a rug. They all settled down, yawning. How lovely the very first evening was! Half-term seemed to be quite long when it was still only the first day.

Mollie fell asleep first. Chinky gave an enormous yawn, and then he fell asleep, too. Peter lay watching the rainbow fading gradually. He could see part of it through the window.

His eyes fell shut. His thoughts went crooked, and he was almost asleep when something woke him.

"Creeeeee-eak!"

Peter opened his eyes. W'hat was that noise that had slipped into his first moment of dreaming? His eyes shut again.

"Cree-ee-ee-EAK!"

Ah! That woke up Peter properly. He sat up quickly. He knew that noise all right! It was made by the wishing- chair. It was about to grow its lovely wings of green and yellow! He sat and stared at the chair.

Could he see bumps coming on its legs? He was almost sure he could. Yes - there was a big one on the right front leg - and now another on the left. He could see bumps on the back legs, too.

Then one bump sprouted a few red feathers! Hurrah! The wishing-chair was growing its wings for them. What luck!

Peter reached over to Chmkv and gave him a little shake. He did the same to Mollie. "Wake up! The chair's growing its wings. Wre can fly off in it tonight!"

Both Mollie and Chinky woke up with a jump. Chinky leapt up and ran to the chair. His face beamed at them.

"Yes! Look at its lovely wings sprouting out - good big ones! Quick, open the door, and we'll all get into the chair - and away we'll go!"

Peter flung the door open. Chinky and Mollie were already sitting in the chair. It flapped its wings and rose a few inches. "Wait for Peter!" cried Mollie, in a fright. Peter leapt across to the chair and sat himself firmly on the seat. Chinky sat himself on the back to make more room. Ah - they were off!

"Tell the chair where to go," said Peter. "Or shall we just let it take us where it wants to?"

"Chair, go to the rainbow!" suddenly cried a voice.

and the chair, which was flying in the opposite direction, changed its course and flew towards the almost-faded rainbow. It had flown right out of the door and up into the air, the children and Chinky holding fast to it, all feeling very excited.

"Who said that?" asked Peter. "Did you, Mollie? Or you, Chinky?"

They both said no. All three gazed at one another, puzzled. Then who had said it? There was nobody on the chair but themselves. Whose voice had commanded the chair to go to the rainbow?

"I expect it was that silly little brownie, calling from the ground," said Peter at last. "He must have seen us flying off, and yelled out to the chair to go to the rainbow. Well - shall we go?"

The Winning-Chair fide ;,/> htl,, the iky. Mollie, Peter tinc  
Chinky felt very excited

"Might as well," said Chinky. "Go on, Chair - go to the rainbow!"

And immediately a voice chimed in: "That's what / said! Go to the rainbow. Chair!"

Who could it be? And where was the speaker? How very, very peculiar!

XIII

## AN ADVENTUROUS NIGHT

"THERE must be somebody invisible on the chair with us!" said Chinky. "Quick - feel about on the seat and on the arms and back. Feel everywhere - and catch hold of whoever it is."

Well, they all felt here and there, but not one of them could feel anybody. They heard a little giggle, but it was quite impossible to find whoever it was giggling.

"Surely the chair itself can't have grown a voice - and a giggle," said Peter at last.

"Of course not. It wouldn't be so silly," said Chinky. "Gracious - here we are at the rainbow already!"

So they were. They landed right on the top of the shimmering bow. "It's like a coloured, curving bridge," said Mollie, putting her foot down to it. "Oh, Peter - we can walk on it. I never, never thought of that."

She jumped down to the rainbow - and immediately she gave a scream.

"Oh, it's slippery! I'm sliding down! Oh, Peter, help me!"

Sure enough, poor Mollie had sat down with a bump, and was slithering down the curving rainbow at top speed. "Follow her, Chair, follow her!" yelled Peter.

"No, don't!" shouted the strange voice, and the chair stopped at once. That made Peter angry. He began to yell at

the top of his voice.

"You do as I tell you, Chair. Follow Mollie, follow Mollie, follow Mollie, follow . . ."

And because his voice was loud and he shouted without stopping, the chair couldn't hear the other little voice that called to it to stop, it slid down the rainbow headlong after Mollie, who was now nearly at the bottom. Chinky held on tightly, looking scared. Would the chair be able to stop at the bottom of the rainbow?

It wouldn't have been able to stop, that was certain - but before it reached the bottom it spread its red wings and flew right off the rainbow, hovering in the air before it flew down to Mollie.

"That was clever of it," said Peter, with a sigh of relief.  
"Mollie, are you all right?"

"I fell on a tuft of grass, or I'd have had a dreadful bump," said Mollie. "Let me get on to the chair again. I don't want it to fly off without me. Oh - what's this?"

She pointed to something half-buried in the grass. It had a handle at one side and she gave it a tug. Something bright and shining flew out of it.

"Mollie! It's the crock of gold!" shouted Peter, "The one that is hidden where the rainbow end touches. We've

Mollie

cfull



found it! All because you slid all the way down and landed by it with a bump. Let's pull it up."

He and Chinky jumped off the chair to go to Mollie. All three took hold of the handle of the crock and tugged. It came up out of the ground with a rush, and all three fell over.

"There it is - and, my word, it's full of gold!" said PeLer. He put his hand into the crock and ran the gold through his fingers. "Who would have thought we would be the first to find the gold at the rainbow's end?"

"Let's carry it to the chair and take it with us," said Mollie. "I don't know what we're going to do with it, though! We could give it away bit by bit to all the poor people we rneel, perhaps."

the crock oj gold.

They lifted the gold on to the seat of the nearby wishing-chair. They were

just about to climb on beside it when the strange little voice cried out again.

"Off you go, wishing-chair! Go to the Brownie- Mountain!"

The chair rose up, flapping its wings. It almost got away - but Peter managed to catch hold of the bottom of its right front leg. He held on for all he was worth, and Mollie helped him. They pulled the chair down between them, and climbed on to it.

"This is amazing!" said Chinky. "Who is it that keeps calling out? Where can he be? Even if he is invisible we should be able to feel him! He nearly got away with the chair, and the

gold, too. My word, if I get hold of him I'll turn him into a fly and blow him into a spider's web!"

"Chair, go to the Old Woman Who Lives in a Shoe!" cried the voice suddenly, and the chair shot off to the east.

"Oh, no!" yelled Peter, angrily. "We're not going there for the Old Woman to get hold of us. Chair, go where you like!"

The chair set off to the west, then, changing its course so suddenly that Chinky almost fell off the back. It flew over a land of gleaming towers.

Chinky peered down. "This is the Land of Bells, I think," he said. "There are bells in every tower. Yes, listen - you can hear them."

"Ding-dong, dong-dong, dell!" rang dozens and dozens of bells, echoing all through the sky round them. The wishing-chair didn't attempt to go down. It kept high above the tall, gleaming towers, and soon it had left the Land of Bells far behind.

"It's beginning to get really dark now," said Peter.

peering down. "Where do you suppose the chair is going to?"

"I think it's rather cross," said Chinky. "It's begun to creak a bit. I wonder why? We haven't done anything to make it angry. I wish it wouldn't swing about so. It feels as if it's trying to shake us off."

7?;v> itern-lookmg broiviv.es came up.

"Yes, it does," said Mollie. "Hold tight, everyone! I say, look - is that a town down there? Chinky, do you know what it is?"

Chinky peered down. "Yes - it's the Town of Bad Dreams. Gracious, I hope we don't go there. We don't want to fall into a bad dream and not know how to get out of it!"

"Go on farther, Chair," commanded Peter at once. A little voice called out, too, "Go farther! Go to the Brownie Mountain!"

"There's that voice again," said Chinky crossly. "Chair, take no notice. You belong to us and you have to do what we say! Go farther - but go where you like. We want an adventure before we go back home."

The chair suddenly began to drop downwards. Chinky peered to see where they were going. "We've passed the Town of Bad Dreams. We're dropping down to the Village of Gobbo. Yes - that's right. Dear me, I wonder why? Gobbo is the head of all the brownies, and bad ones are sent to him to be punished."

A loud wail rose on the air. "Oh my, oh my! Chair, go to the Brownie Mountain, I tell you!"

But the chair took no notice. It flew right down to the ground, and immediately two stern-looking brownies came up, both with long beards and shaggy eyebrows.

"Who has been brought to be punished?" said one. "Which of you is a bad brownie?"

"Not one of us," said Peter, puzzled. "Mollie and I are children - and Chinky here is a pixie."

"Well, go away again, then," said one of the brownies.  
"Landing is not allowed here unless naughty brownies are to be taken before our chief, Gobbo."

"Right. Chair, fly away again," said Peter. Up flew the chair - but one of the brownies suddenly gave a loud cry and caught hold of the right-hand wing. The chair almost tipped over, and Chinky fell right off the back. He landed with a bump on the ground.

"What did you do that for?" he shouted to the brownie. Then he stared in surprise. The two brownies pulled the children off the chair, which was now back again on the ground - and then they turned the chair upside-down! It creaked angrily.

"Don't do that!" said Peter, astonished. Then he stared, even more astonished! Underneath the chair, clinging desperately to it, was the naughty little brownie who had peeped and pried outside the playroom!

"Look at that!" cried Mollie. "It's Nose-About, the tiresome brownie! He must have slipped into the playroom and clung to the underneath of the chair so that we couldn't see him. And he flew off with us, and tried to make the chair go where he wanted to."

"And when we found the rainbow gold he wanted to go off to Brownie Mountain with it. That's where he lives, I expect," said Peter. "It was his voice we kept hearing! He was underneath the seat of the chair all the time."

"No wonder the chair took us to the Village of Gobbo, then," said Chinky. "It knew he was under it and wanted him to be punished. Brownies, take him away. He's a nuisance."

"No, no! Mercy, Mercy!" wept the little brownie. "Forgive me! I just wanted a ride, that's all. And when I saw the gold I

thought I'd make the chair go to my home with it - then I'd be rich all my life."

"You're very bad and you want punishing," said Peter. "I'm not at all sorry for you."

"One spanking every day for a month," said one of the brownies, solemnly, clutching hold of the frightened brownie. "And he will never be allowed to go back home."

The little brownie wailed loudly. "But my mother will miss me so. She loves me, she does really. I do lots of jobs for her. And my little sister loves me, too. I take her to school each day. Do, do let me go. I only wanted the gold for my mother."

Mollie suddenly felt sorry for him. She knew how much her mother would miss her if she were taken away. And perhaps this naughty little brownie was quite good

and kind at home.

She put her hand on the arm of one of the brownies. "Let him go, please. He's sorry now. He won't be bad again."

"Oh, yes he will," said the brownie. "His mother didn't spank him when she should, so he's growing into a perfect nuisance. We'll soon cure him."

"No, no, no," wailed the little brownie. "I'll tell my mother to smack me, really I will. Let me go. I want my mother, I do, I do."

"How much will you charge us for letting him go?" asked Mollie, much to Peter's surprise.

The two brownies talked together about this. "Well," said one at last, "our master, the Great Gobbo, is laving out some

wonderful rose-gardens, but he hasn't enough money to finish them. We will let this brownie go if you pay us a fine of one thousand gold pieces. And that's cheap!"

"It isn't," said Mollie. "Peter, help me to count out the gold in this crock. I don't think there are as many as a thousand pieces, though. We'll just see."

They all began to count, the little brownie too. They

"There you are ei thousand pieces of gold," said Peter.

counted one hundred - then two - then three and four and five - and, will you believe it, in that rainbow-crock there were exactly one thousand and one pieces of gold!

"There you are - a thousand pieces," said Peter, handing them over. "We'll have the odd one - and the crock, too, because it will look nice on our play-room mantelpiece. Now can we go?"

"Yes, certainly," said the brownies, delighted. "But we must warn this little brownie that next time the fine will be tzvo thousand pieces! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye," called everyone, and up went the wishing-chair into the air again. Where to next?

"Thank you," said the small brownie, in a humble voice. "Thank you very much. Please drop me at Brownie Mountain, will you?"

## LAND OF WISHES

"WELL, brownie, you were lucky to have a kind friend like Mollie to pay your fine," said Chinky, who wasn't really very pleased about it at all. "Behave vour-self, please - or I shall tell your mother all about you."

The chair was a bit crowded now, with the two children, the brownie, and the pixie, and the empty crock as well. Peter had the one piece of gold that was left. He had put it into his pocket.

"I'll take you to the Land of Wishes if you like," said the small brownie, humbly. He was very anxious to please them all now. "You can have as many wishes as you like this weekend because it's the Princess Peronel's birthday. I've an invitation ticket. Look."

He pulled a rather crumpled ticket from his pocket. It certainly was an invitation.

"But it's for you, not for us," said Peter.

"It says 'For Brownie Nose-About and Friends,' " said the brownie. "I'm Nose-About - and you're my friends, aren't you? Oh, please do say you are!"

"Well - all right, we're your friends then," said Peter. "Mollie certainly was a friend to you in the Village of Gobbo! Chinky, shall we go to the Land of Wishes? I know quite a few wishes I'd like to wish!"

"Yes, let's go," said Chinky. "Nose-About, you d better tell the chair to go, because you're the only one that has the invitation."

"I've got an invitation ticket to The Land of Wishes," said Xose-About.

So, in rather an important voice, Nose-About told the chair where to go. "To the Land of Wishes, please," he said. "To the Princess Peronel's birthday party."

The chair gave a little creak and flew straight upwards. It was very dark now and stars were out in the sky. Mollie began to feel sleepy. She nodded her head and leaned against Peter. Peter nodded his head, too, and both of them slept soundly. Chinky and Nose-About kept guard. The chair flew all night long, for the Land of Wishes was a long, long way away.

The sun was up and the sky was full of light when at last the two children awoke. Below them was a land of flowers and lakes and streams and shining palaces. How lovely!

"Does everyone live in a palace here?" asked Mollie, marvelling at so many palaces.

"Oh, yes. It's easy enough to wish for one," said Nose-About, peering down. "And then when you're tired of living in an enormous place with windows everywhere, you just wish for a rose-covered cottage. Would you like a palace for a bit? I'll wish you one!"

The chair flew downwards. It landed in a field of shining, star-like flowers. "Here we are," said the brownie. "I'll wish for a palace to begin with - and then we can be princes and a princess, and go to the Princess Peronel's birthday party. I wish for a palace with one thousand and one windows!"



And silently and shimmeringly a tall, slender palace rose up around them. The sun shone in through hundreds of windows.

"I'll just count if there are a thousand and one," said Nose-About.

"Oh no\ We simply can't count up to a thousand and one all over again!" groaned Peter. "I say - look at the wishing-chair. It's standing on that platform there wishing it was a throne!"

"I wish it zvas a throne!" said Mollie at once. And dear me, the good old wishing-chair changed into a gleaming throne, with a big red velvet cushion on its seat and tassels hanging down its back. It looked very grand indeed.

Peter went and sat on it. "I wish I was a Prince!" he said. And to Mollie's enormous surprise her brother suddenly looked like a very handsome little prince, with a circlet of gold round his head and a beautiful cloak hanging from his velvet-clad shoulders. He grinned at Mollie. "Better wish yourself to be a Princess before I order you about!" he said. "I feel like giving a whole lot of orders! Where's my horse? Where are my dogs? Where are my servants?"

Well, before very long Mollie was a Princess, and looked quite beautiful in a dress that swept the ground and twinkled with thousands of bright jewels as she walked. Chinky wished himself a new suit and a new wand. Nose-About still felt very humble so he didn't wish for anything for himself but only things for the others.

He wished for horses and dogs and cats and servants and ice-creams and everything he could think of.

"I think we've got enough dogs, Nose-About," said Peter at last. "And I'd rather not have any more ice-creams. I feel

rather as if I'd like a good breakfast. All the clocks you wished for have just struck nine o'clock. I feel hungry."

The brownie wished for so much porridge and bacon and eggs that there was enough for the cats and dogs too. The servants had taken the horses out of the palace, which made Mollie feel more comfortable, because when the brownie had first wished for them they kept galloping round the enormous room. She was afraid of being knocked over.

That was a most exciting morning. When the children got into the way of wishing there was no end to the things they thought of!

"I feel like snowballing! I wish for plenty of snow!" said Peter, suddenly. And outside the palace windows fell the snowflakes, thick and fast. There was soon enough for a game. It was very easy to wish the snow away when they were tired of snowballing and wish for something else - an aeroplane they could fly, or a train they could drive.

"I wish this would last all over our weekend," sighed Mollie. "I'm enjoying it so."

"Well - I suppose it will," said Peter, "now you've wished it, the wish will come true. But what about Mother? She won't like it if we stay away all the time."

"I'll wish her here, then," said Mollie. But Peter wouldn't let her.

"No. Don't," he said. "If she's with Granny she wouldn't like leaving her - and it would upset Granny to see Mother suddenly disappear. We'll just enjoy ourselves here, and then try and explain to Mother when we get home."

The Princess's party was wonderful. It began at four o'clock that afternoon, and lasted till past midnight. There was a birthday cake that was so very big it took six

The beautiful wings carried Mollie high in the air.

little servants to cut it into slices. One hundred candles burned on it! How old Peronel must be!

"A hundred years old is young for a fairy," said Chinky. "See how beautiful the Princess still is."

She certainly was. Peter wished hard for a dance with her - and at once she glided over to him, and danced as lightly as a moth. "Now I can say I've danced with a princess!" thought Peter, pleased.

The next day came and slid away happily. Then the next day and the next. The children grew used to having every single wish granted.

"A big chocolate ice at once!" And hey presto, it came. "A tame lion to ride on!" There it was, purring like a cat. "Wings on my back to fly high above the trees!" And there they were, fluttering strongly, carrying Mollie high in the air. What a truly lovely feeling.

On that fourth day the children didn't wish quite so many things. "Tired of wishing?" asked Chinky, who hadn't really wished many things. "Ah - people always get tired of wishes coming true after a time."

"I can't seem to think of any more," said Peter.

"I keep thinking of Mother," said Mollie. "I do so hope she isn't worried about us. We've got to go back home today, Peter - do you realise that? It's the day we have to go back to school. It's a pity we've had so little time at home. We shall hardly have seen Daddy and Mother at all."

"Oh goodness - how the weekend has flown," said Peter. "I wanted to do quite a lot of things at home, too. I wanted to get out my electric train - and didn't you want to take your dolls out just once in their pram, Mollie?"

"Yes. I did," said Mollie. "Oh dear - I do wish we had the weekend in front of us still, so that we could enjoy being at home, too! I feel as if we've rather wasted it now. Peter, I think we ought to go back. We've a train to catch, you know. We mustn't be late back for school."

"All right. Chinky, we'd better change the throne back to the wishing-chair," said Peter. "Wish for its wings, will you? They've gone, but a wish will bring them back, in the Land of Wishes!"

It did, of course. As soon as the throne had changed back into the wishing-chair they knew so well, Chinky wished for the wings to grow - and they sprouted out gaily, at once, looking bigger than ever.

"You coming, Nose-About?" said Peter to the little brownie.

"No. I'm going back home to my mother," he said.

"Good-bye. Thank you for being kind to me."

"Well, you've certainly repaid our kindness!" said Mollie. "I've never had such a wonderful time in my life. Now - are we all ready? Wishing-chair, home, please, as fast as you can!"

It was a long, long way back from the Land of Wishes. They all three went sound asleep, and the chair was careful not to jolt them at all in case they fell off. It flew down to the playroom at last, and went in gently at the door. It tipped out Mollie and Peter on to their mattresses, and Chinky on to his cushion. The crock that had contained the rainbow gold tipped out, too, and fell on to the carpet. Luckily it didn't break.

The children groaned a little, and then slept on soundly, curled up on their mattresses. The chair stood still. Its red wings disappeared gradually. It was just a chair.

And then there came a loud knocking at the door, and a loud voice, too.

"Master Peter! Miss Mollie! How late you are sleeping! Haven't you had your breakfast yet? Your mother has telephoned to say that Granny is much better and she'll be home to lunch. Isn't that good news?"

The children woke up with a jump and stared at Mrs. Williams' smiling face. She was looking in at the door. Peter sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Well, I declare!" said Mrs. Williams. "You are not in your night-things! You don't mean to say you didn't go to bed properly last night? Do wake up. It's half-past ten already!"

"Half-past ten?" said Mollie, amazed. "What day is it, Mrs. Willy?"

"Saturday, to be sure!" said Mrs. Williams, surprised. "You came home yesterday, that was Friday - and so today's Saturday!"

"But - but surely it's Tuesday or perhaps even Wednesday," said Mollie, remembering the wonderful weekend in the Land of Wishes. "Aren't we due back at school?"

"Bless us all, you're asleep and dreaming!" said Mrs. Williams. "Well, I must be getting on with my work. It's Saturday morning, half-past ten, and your mother will be home for lunch. Now - do you understand that?"

And off she went, quite puzzled. She hadn't seen Chinky on the cushion. He was still fast asleep!

Mollie looked at Peter and her eyes shone. "Peter, oh Peter!" she said, "do you remember that I wished wTe had the weekend in front of us still? Well, that wish has come true, too. We've had the weekend once in our palace - and now we're going to have it all over again at home. Could anything be nicer!"

"Marvellous!" said Peter, jumping up. "Simply marvellous! Wake up, you lazy old Chinky. We've good news for you. It's not Tuesday - it's only Saturday!"

So there they are, just going to welcome their mother back again, and looking forward to a wonderful half- term.

"Crreee-eee-eak!" says the good old wishing-chair, happily.

## SANTA GLAUS AND THE WISHING-CHAIR

I AM sure you have not forgotten the adventures of Peter and Mollie with their wishing-chair! Well, one Christmas they had a fine adventure with Chinky, their pixie friend, and the good old chair.

Christmas was coming. Peter and Mollie were home from boarding-school and were very excited.

"Two more days till Christmas!" said Peter. "Then stockings, and crackers, and pudding, and Christmas tree, and parties. Oooh!"

The next day came - and that was Christmas Eve. "Only today," said Mollie, "then Christmas!"

They went down to their playroom, which was built at the bottom of the garden. The wishing-chair was there, but Chinky, their friend, was not. He had gone Christmas shopping.

"Chinky said he would hang his stocking up on the back of the wishing-chair," said Mollie. "Then Santa Claus would fill it for him. Where shall we put the presents we have bought for him, Peter?"

They put them on the sofa in the corner, and then ran back to the house. They had not been for any rides on the wishing-chair so far these holidays - but they had been so busy doing their Christmas shopping that they

had hardly paid any attention to the magic chair.

The children hung up their stockings that night at the end of their beds. Mother tucked them up, kissed them, and put out the light.

"Now, go to sleep quickly," she said. "No staying awake and peeping."

So they went straight off to sleep, and began to dream about parties and presents. But in the middle of the night Peter suddenly woke up. He had heard a queer noise in his sleep. What could it be?

It was some one tapping on the window-pane outside. Tap-tap-tap! Tap-tap-tap!

"Mollie! Wake up!" cried Peter. "There's someone knocking at the window."

Mollie sat up, rubbing her eyes.

"Do you suppose it's Santa Glaus?" she said, in an excited voice.

"Of course not! He comes down the chimney," said Peter. "Come on. Let's see who it is."

They went to the window and opened it - and in popped Chinky the pixie, shivering with cold, and panting with excitement.

"Mollie! Peter! Something's happened! I was asleep in the playroom when I heard a galloping noise - and I looked out of the window. And I saw Santa Claus and his reindeer in the sky, and the reindeer were running away. Something had frightened them. Then I heard a crash, and I'm sure the reindeer have galloped into some trees, and broken the sleigh. Will you come with me and see?"

The children dressed quickly, for it was a cold night. They put on their warmest coats and crept downstairs. Soon they were at the bottom of the garden. The moon came out from behind a cloud and lighted up everything for them.

"It's nearly midnight," said Chinky. "I do hope Santa Claus hasn't been hurt."



He hurried them into the field at the back of the garden and ran towards some big elm trees - and there they saw a strange sight.

The sleigh and the reindeers had got caught in the trees. The children and Chinky could quite clearly see them in the moonlight.

"Oh dear," said Mollie, half-frightened. "I wonder where Santa Claus is?"

"There's somebody climbing down the tree - look!" said Chinky. So there was - and even as the children watched, someone jumped down from the tree and came towards them.

"It's Santa Claus," said Peter. Sure enough, it was. There was no mistake about it, for there were the bright twinkling eyes, the snow-white beard, and the red,

hooded coat.

They dragged the big jolly man across the field.

"Good evening, sir," said Chinky. "I'm afraid you've had an accident." "I certainly have," said Santa Claus, in a worried voice. "Something frightened my reindeer and they ran away at top speed. They ran into the top of that tall tree and wrecked my sleigh. Now what am I to do? It's Christmas night and I've thousands of stockings to fill."

Santa Claus still had his sack with him, and it was bulging full of toys. He put it down on the ground and wiped his hot forehead.

"What will happen to the poor reindeer?" asked Mollie.

"Oh, I've sent a message to my reindeer stables, and they will send along two or three men to free them from the branches and take them home," said Santa Claus. "And now the next thing is - what

will happen to me? Here am I, Santa Claus, with a

big sack of toys to fill every one's stockings - and no way to get to those stockings."

It was then that Peter had his wonderful idea. He nearly cried with excitement as he spoke.

"Santa Claus, oh, Santa Claus! I know what you can do. Borrow our wishing-chair."

"Whatever is the boy talking about?" said Santa Claus, puzzled. "Wishing-chair! There aren't such things nowadays."

"Well, zve've got one," said Mollie, overjoyed at Peter's idea. "Come on, Santa. We'll take you to where we keep it, and then you'll see for yourself. You could fly in it to every chimney quite easily."

They dragged the big jolly man across the field and through the hedge into their garden. Chinky was just as excited as everyone else. They all went into the playroom and Chinky lighted the lamp.

"There you are," he said proudly, holding the lamp over the old wishing-chair. "There's the wonderful chair. And look! It's grown its wings all ready to take you, Santa. It might have known you were coming."

Santa stared at the rose-red wings that were slowly flapping to and fro on the legs of the chair. His eyes shone in the lamplight.

"Yes," he said. "Yes. The very thing. I didn't know

there was a wishing-chair in the world nowadays. May I  
I/^yfh Vvl'JjjwF\StT rea% borrow it, children?" fV^AK, mm \\  
"Yes," said Mollie.

"On one condition," said Peter suddenly.

"What's that?" asked Santa Claus, putting his great bag over his shoulder.

"Take us with you in the chair for just a little while, so that we can see how you slip down the chimneys and into the bedrooms," begged Peter. "Oh do!"

"But will the chair hold all of us?" said Santa doubtfully. "I'm rather heavy, you know."

"Oh, the chair is as strong as ten horses," said Chinky eagerly. "You don't know the adventures it has had, Santa. Get in, and we'll go."

Santa sat down in the chair. He filled it right up. He took Mollie on his knee. Chinky climbed to the back of the chair, where he always sat - and Peter sat on the sack of toys. The chair gave a creak, flapped its wings fast, and rose into the air.

"We're off!" cried Mollie, in excitement. "Oh, who would have thought that we'd be flying to the house-tops

1 12

with Santa Claus tonight. What a fine adventure we'll have!"

The wishing-chair rose high into the air once it got out-of-doors. Mollie shivered, for the air was frosty. Santa Claus covered her up with part of his wide coat. They passed the elm tree where the sleigh and the reindeer had got caught. "Look," said Peter. "There are your men freeing the reindeer from the branches, Santa Claus."

"Good!" said Santa. "They will be quite all right now. Hallo, the chair is flying down to this roof. Who lives here, children?"

"Watch me slip dozen!" he said - and in a second he zvas gone!

"Fanny and Tommy Dawson," said Peter. "Oh, have you got presents for their stocking, Santa? They are such nice, kind children."

"Yes, I know," said Santa, looking at a big notebook where many names were written down. "Ah! Fannv wants two twin dolls and a puzzle, and Tommy wants a

train and some lines. Put your hand into the sack, Peter, please, and take them out."

Peter put his hand into the enormous sack, and the first things he felt were the dolls, the puzzle, and the train with lines! He pulled them out.

"You might see if there are any oranges and nuts there too," said Santa. "I always like to give a little extra something to good children."

Peter put his hand into the sack again and felt a handful of nuts, apples, and oranges. He gave them to Santa. The chair flew down to a flat piece of roof just by a big chimney. Santa put Mollie off his knee and stood up.

"Watch me slip down this chimney!" he said - and in a second he was gone! It was astonishing how such a big man could get down the chimney.

"Quick!" said Chinky, patting the chair. "Get in, Mollie. We'll fly the chair down to Fanny's window and peep in to see what Santa Claus does there. He won't mind."

The chair rose off the roof and flew down to a little window. It put two of its legs there and balanced itself most unsafely, flapping its wings all the time so that it wouldn't fall. Chinky and the children peered in at the window.

Fanny and Tommy always had a night-light, and they could see the room quite clearly. Fanny was asleep in her cot, and Tommy was asleep in his small bed.

"Look! There's Santa's feet coming out of the fireplace!" said Chinky excitedly. "Don't they look funny! And now there's his knees - and his waist - and all of him. It's funny he doesn't get black!"

So the chair flew down to the window-sill and tried to balance itself.

Santa Claus slipped right out of the fireplace and tiptoed to Fanny's bed. There was a stocking hanging at the end. Santa put the oranges, apples, and nuts at the bottom, and then stuffed in the puzzle and the twin dolls.

Fanny didn't stir! She was quite sound asleep. Santa Claus went to Tommy next and filled his stocking too. Then he tiptoed back to the chimney, put his head up, and was soon lost to sight. The wishing-chair flew back to the roof and waited there for Santa. Up he came, puffing and blowing.

"I saw you peeping in at the window!" he said. "You gave me quite a fright at first. Come along now - to the next house where there are children!"

It was not far off, for Harry and Ronald, two big boys, lived next door! Santa looked them up in

his notebook and found that they were good, clever boys. Neither of them had asked for anything in their stockings. They had just left it to Santa Claus to choose for them.

"Now, let me see," said Santa. "Clever boys, my notebook says. What about a book on aeroplanes for Harry, and a big meccano set - and a book on ships for Ronald, and a really difficult puzzle? Put your hand in the sack, Peter, and see what you can find."

Peter slipped in his hand - and, of course, he found the books, the meccano, and the puzzle at once! It almost seemed as if the toys arranged themselves just right for Santa Claus! It was part of his magic, Peter supposed.

He handed the things out to Santa Claus, and then took apples, nuts, oranges, and a few crackers from the sack too. Santa Claus got off the chair and went down the chimney again.

"Come on, chair," said Mollie. "Let's go and peep in at the window again!"

So the chair flew down to the window-sill and tried to balance itself. Harry and Ronald had no night-light, but the moon shone well in at their window, and the children and Chinky could easily see what was happening inside.

They saw Santa creep out of the chimney, and go to Harry's stocking - and then, just as Santa was turning to go to Ronald's bed, the wishing-chair fell off the window-sill! The sill was very narrow indeed, and the chair simply couldn't stay there!

The children gave a small squeal, for they were frightened when the chair fell. Of course, it at once rose up again to the roof, flapping its strong wings. But the noise had awakened Ronald, and he sat up!

The children didn't see what happened, but Santa Claus told them when he at last came up the chimney once more.

"You shouldn't have made such a noise," he said. "You woke Ronald, and I had to hide behind a chair till he lay- down and went to sleep again! I might have had to wait for an hour!"

"We're very sorry," said Chinky. "The chair slipped and we thought we were falling! Perhaps we'd better not peep in at the windows any more."

"I suppose we couldn't come down a chimney with you, could we?" asked Mollie longingly. "I've always wanted to do that."

" Yes, you can if you like," said Santa; "but you mustn't make any noise. Now who's next on the list? Oh, Joy Brown, seven years old."

Nobody said anything, but Mollie and Peter thought a lot. Joy was not a bit like her name - she was a spiteful, unkind child, who didn't bring joy to anyone. Mollie was surprised that Santa Claus should take presents to Joy.

But he wasn't going to! He read a few lines out loud and then pursed up his mouth. "Dear, dear! Joy seems to be a bad girl. Listen to this! 'Joy Brown - unkind, selfish, and never gives any happiness to any one. Does not deserve any toys this Christmas.' Well, well, well - we must miss her out, I'm afraid."

So the wishing-chair flew past Joy's house. There was nothing in that naughty little girl's stocking the next morning!

"This is George's house," said Peter eagerly, as the chair flew down on to a sloping roof. It was so sloping that they all had to hold on to the nearest chimney.

"Can't we go down with you, Santa?"

Santa nodded, so Mollie tried to get into the chimney. But she stuck fast and couldn't go down! Then Peter tried, but he stuck fast too, and so did Chinky. Santa Claus laughed softly.

"Ah! You don't know my trick! I could never get down some of these narrow chimneys if I didn't use some magic oil to



make the chimney slippery! In the old days chimneys were very wide and there was no difficulty, but nowadays the chimneys are narrow and small. Stand back, Chinky, and I'll pour a little of my oil down."

Santa Claus tipped a small bottle up, and a few drops fell down the chimney. "Now try, Mollie," said Santa.

So Mollie tried again, and this time she slid down the chimney quite easily, and crept out of the bottom into George's bedroom! It did seem queer! There was George in bed, and he was snoring very gently, so Mollie knew he must be asleep.

"Yes, he's a fine boy" said Peter, and he took the books, the fruit, and the box of small motor-ears.

Then Peter slid down, then Chinky, and last of all Santa Claus. "You can fill George's stocking if you like," he whispered to Peter. "You're a friend of George's, aren't you? I know you like him very much."

"Yes, he's a fine boy," said Peter, and he took the books, the fruit, and the box of small motor-cars that Santa gave him. Soon George's stocking was full to the top!

"It's fun playing at being Santa Claus!" said Peter. Then they all crept up the chimney again, but Chinky had a dreadful

time trying not to sneeze, because the soot got up his nose and tickled it.

"A-tishoo!" he said, when he stood on the roof again, holding firmly to a chimney. "A-tishoo!"

"Sh!" said Santa in alarm. "Don't do that!"

"A-tishoo!" said poor Chinky. "I can't help it. A-tishoo!"

Santa Claus bundled him into the chair and they all

flew off to another house. "Now this must be the last house you visit with me," said Santa Claus, seeing Mollie yawning and rubbing her eyes. "You must be fresh and lively on Christmas Day, or people will wonder what is the matter with you. You may come down the chimney here, and then I shall fly back to your own house with you, and go on my journey by myself!"

The children and Chinky were disappointed, but they knew Santa was right. They really were beginning to feel very sleepy. They slipped down that chimney with Santa, and Mollie filled Angela's stocking herself with all kinds of exciting things. Mollie wondered what Angela would say if she knew that she, Mollie, had filled her stocking and not Santa Claus. It wouldn't be any use telling her, for she wouldn't believe it!

Then Santa Claus told the wishing-chair to fly back to the playroom, and very soon it was there, standing on the floor.

"Good-bye, dear old Santa!" said Mollie, and she gave the jolly old man a hug. So did Peter. Chinky shook hands with him very solemnly. Then they watched him fly off in their chair to fill hundreds more stockings. He waved to them as he went out of sight.

"Oh, I'm so sleepy!" said Mollie. "Good-night, Chinky dear - see you tomorrow!"

They ran up the garden, crept into the house, and were soon fast asleep. And in the morning, what a wonderful surprise!

Santa Claus had come back at the end of his journey, and his last visit had been to Mollie and Peter. He must have climbed down their chimney whilst they slept, and he had filled their stockings from top to toe! They were almost bursting with good things! The presents had even overflowed on to the floor!

"Oh, here's just what I wanted!" cried Mollie, picking up a book. "Mr. Galliano's Circus! And here's a doll that opens and shuts its eyes - and a toy typewriter - and a doll's bathroom - and, oh look, Peter, you've got six different kinds of aeroplanes!"

Peter had plenty of other things beside those. The two children were very happy indeed. Mother was most astonished when she saw all their toys.

"Why, anyone would think you were great friends of Santa Claus, by the way he has spoilt you with so many presents!" she said.

"We are friends of his!" said Mollie happily.

"Oh, here's just what I wanted!" cried Mollie.

After breakfast they went down to the playroom to wish Chinky a merry Christmas - and do you know, he had as

many things as they had, too! So you can guess what a fine Christmas morning they had, playing with everything.

"Good old Santa Claus, and good old wishing-chair!" said Peter, patting the chair, which was safely back in its place. "I do hope Santa Claus is having as good a Christmas as we are!"

Well, I expect he was, don't you?

XVI

## MORE ABOUT THE WISHING-CHAIR

YOU remember the wishing-chair, don't you, that Mollie and Peter had, with Chinky the pixie?

Well, Mollie and Peter went to boarding-school, and Chinky took the chair home to his mother until the holidays came. And you can guess that the very first day of the holidays Mollie and Peter rushed down to the playroom at the bottom of the garden to see if Chinky was there!

"Chinky's not here!" said Mollie, in disappointment. "Nor is the chair!" said Peter,

But just at that very moment there came a whizzing noise, and in at the door flew the good old wishing-chair, with Chinky sitting as usual on the back, grinning all over his merry pixie face.

"Chinky! Oh, Chinky!" yelled Mollie and Peter, in delight. Chinky leapt off the chair and ran to the two children. They flung their arms round one another and hugged like bears.

"Oh, it's good to see you again, Chinky," said Mollie happily.

"You don't know how I've missed you and Peter!" said Chinky. "Now we'll have some more adventures!"

"Well, first of all, tell us any news you have," said Peter. But Chinky pointed to the wishing-chair.

It was flapping its red wings as hard as ever it could, making quite a draught.

"The chair's glad to see you, too!" said Chinky, laughing. "And it badly wants to take us somewhere. Come on - let's get in and go whilst the chair has its wings."

Mollie and Peter sat on the seat as they always used to do, and Chinky sat on the back. The chair flapped its wings, rose into the air, and flew off.

"Oh," said Mollie. "What fun it is to fly off in the wishing-chair again! I do so like it!"

The children leaned over and looked at the towns and villages they were flying over. They knew exactly when they came to the borders of Fairyland, for Fairy-land always had a soft blue mist hanging around it.

"Where are we going?" asked Peter.

"Don't know," said Chinky. "This is the first time the chair has had a fly since you went to school. It's been a proper well-behaved, ordinary chair in my mother's

house for weeks - now it's enjoying a good fly!"

The chair flew on and on. The children watched the towers of Giantland pass - the blue seas of Pixieland - the hills of the Red Goblins - and still the chair flew on.

At last it flew downwards. The children felt excited. Chinky looked down to see where they were going.

"I've never been here before," he said. "I don't even know the name of the land."

The chair came to rest in a little town. The children jumped off, but Chinky still sat on the back of the chair, trying to think where they had come to.

A lot of little folk came running up. They had very wide-open eyes, long ears, long noses and no chin at all. Mollie wasn't sure that she liked the look of them.

"What is this land?" asked Chinky.

"It's Disappearing Land," said one of the little folk, smiling. "You'll have to be careful you don't vanish."

Mollie remembered the Disappearing Island. It had disappeared suddenly just as they were going to land on it. Would this country disappear suddenly too? She asked Chinky.

"No," said Chinky. "But zue may disappear if we don't look out! I think we'd better go off again. I don't want to vanish somewhere!"

The children sat down in the wishing-chair once more. But its wings had gone. It wouldn't fly at all.

"Oh!" said Chinky. "First disappearing trick! I suppose they've done that to keep us here. Now, hold hands, all of us then if one of us vanishes the others can still feel him and take him along. We may as well have a look round whilst we are here. We'll remember where the chair is just by that yellow lamp-post. Come on!"

They went down the little, winding street. The strange little folk hurried everywhere, nodding and smiling. There was a market nearby, and the children and Chinky went to see what was being sold.

It was a strange village. Mollie was looking at a crooked little house with twisty chimneys when it quite suddenly disappeared and she was staring at nothing. It gave her such a shock.

Peter got a shock too. A dog with big pointed ears came running up to him and licked his fingers. Peter bent down to pat it - and found he was patting air! The dog had vanished under his very nose!

Even Chinky got caught too - and he was used to strange things! He went to buy three rosy apples off a stall. He gave the old dame there three pennies - but just as he took the apples from her they disappeared into nothing! There was Chinky, his three pennies given to the old dame, and his hands trying to take hold of three

There teas Chinky trying to lake hold of three apples that had disappeared.

apples that had disappeared!

"I want my money back," he said to the old woman, who was grinning widely. "I haven't got my apples."

"Well, I gave them to you," said the old woman. "They are not here! You can't have your money back."

Chinky was angry. He stalked off down the street with Peter and Mollie. He kicked crossly at the kerb. At once it disappeared!

"I say! Don't do that," said Peter, in alarm. "You might kick the whole street away!"

Chinky was pleased to find he could kick things away. He kicked very hard indeed at a lamp-post. But that didn't disappear! It just stood there, as solid as ever - and Chinky gave a loud yell and hopped about holding his poor toe!

Mollie and Peter couldn't help laughing. Peter leaned against a shop window and roared at Chinky - and then, very suddenly, the window behind him vanished and he fell over backwards! The whole shop had disappeared!

Peter stopped laughing and picked himself up. Then it was Chinky's turn to laugh. Peter did look so very much astonished!

"This is a funny sort of town," said Mollie, looking round her carefully, not quite certain what was going to disappear next. As she spoke, three chimneys disappeared off a cottage, and a door nearby vanished as well. It seemed as if every-thing that she looked at disappeared!

"I am hungry," said Chinky, wishing he had the three apples he had bought. "Look! There's a shop selling buns. I wonder if they' 11 disappear if I buy some!"

He walked into the shop. A pointed-eared girl sat

knitting behind the count as Chinky went in, ar disappeared. But she didn't seem to mind at all.



"Have you any currant buns?" asked Chinky, looking round, hoping the whole shop wouldn't disappear before he had bought the buns.

"Yes, fresh made today," said the girl, and she pointed to some fine big ones, with plenty of currants in, and looking nice and sticky on the top.

"I'll take three, please," said Chinky. He didn't give the girl the pennies until he had the bag of buns safely in his hand. Then he ran out of the shop and showed the buns to the others.

"Look at the lovely, juicy currants!" he said. "Come on - let's sit down on this seat and eat our buns."

They sat down on the . She put her knitting down immediately the needles

Chinky zvalkd into the shop.

seat - but it at once vanished under them, and the three of them rolled over on the path. How all the little folk of the village laughed and laughed!

"I do think the way things disappear here is silly!" said Chinky, rubbing his head. "Where are the buns?"

"In the bag," said Mollie. "Good thing they are, or they would have rolled in the road!"

But the buns had disappeared out of the bag, which was quite empty. The children stared into it in disgust. "Oh, let's

go back to the wishing-chair," said Peter. "I'm tired of this place."

"Oooh, Peter!" said Mollie suddenly. "Look! Your feet have disappeared!"

Peter stared down at his feet - and it was true, they had gone!

"Well, I can still walk all right," he said. "So they must be there although we can't see them. Thank goodness for that! Oooh, Chinky! Where's your mouth?"

Chinky hadn't got a mouth! It had disappeared!

A big wind suddenly swept round the corner of the street and took off Chinky's cap. He ran after it, and Peter ran too - and do you know, when they turned round to go back to Mollie, she had disappeared as well!

"Oh! Mollie! Mollie!" cried Peter, in alarm. "Where are you?"

But there was no answer. Peter turned to Chinky. "Chinky! Did you see where Mollie went?"

But Chinky had now gone too! There was nobody at all where Chinky had been standing, putting on his hat again. Peter felt more alarmed than ever. This would never do!

"Bother!" he said fiercely. "Chinky said we'd better keep hold of each other's hands, in case this happened - and we all forgot about it - and now, on our very first holiday adventure, this has happened! Mollie! Chinky!"

Nobody answered Peter. And then a strange thing happened. Peter disappeared too! He felt as if he was there all right - but he couldn't see himself! He held out his hand and it wasn't there! He kicked up a foot - and it wasn't there either! Then he knew that he was invisible too.

"Now what am I to do?" he thought. "This is dreadful. Let me think."

He stood and thought. Little folk came up and bumped into him for they couldn't see him. At first Peter was cross - then, as he saw their astonished faces, he remembered that he couldn't be seen. He ran and stood in a doorway where no one would bump into him.

"What's to be done, what's to be done?" thought Peter. "The others are in the same fix as I am. What will they do? Why - they will try to get back to the wishing- chair, I expect! That's what I must do too! We left it by the yellow lamp-post!" And off he went to find it.

PETER made his way back to where they had left the wishing-chair. He did hope he might meet Mollie and Chinky there. He soon saw the yellow lamp-post in the distance, where the chair had been left.

"Good!" thought Peter, hurrying. "I'll soon be back with the chair again - and I'll sit in it and wait there till the others come."

But as he got nearer he could see a crowd round the chair. The strange little folk of the village were shouting to one another about it, and two of the pointed-eared men had hold of the chair.

"I tell you I shall have this chair!" yelled one man, and he pulled hard.

"And I tell you I want it!" shouted the other, angrily, and he pulled the other way.

"Goodness! The chair will be in bits soon," thought Peter, and he ran at top speed to the crowd of people.

"Leave that chair alone!" he shouted. "It's not yours - it belongs to me!"

Every one looked round - but, of course, they couldn't see Peter, for he was quite invisible. They only heard his voice.

"Who are you?" they said.

"I'm Peter, and I want my chair," said the little boy. he

"I tell you I shall have this chair!" yelled one titan.

pushed his way through the crowd and took hold of the chair firmly. At once the other two who were holding it began to pull away hard. But Peter didn't let go.

"Show yourself, show yourself!" shouted the crowd.

"I don't know how to," said Peter. "I suddenly disappeared, and I can't even see myself. But I'm real enough, and if anyone begins to be horrid to me I've got fists that can hit hard. And you won't see them coming, either! Now, let go my chair, please."

"We don't believe it's yours, we don't believe it's yours!" cried everyone, siding with the two men who had got hold of the poor wishing-chair.

Peter didn't know what to do. He certainly couldn't get the chair away by himself. "Oh, wishing-chair, we are in a fix!" he groaned. "Our very first holiday adventure, too! It's bad luck!"

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Suddenly the wishing-chair decided to help matters itself. It grew its wings very fast. It flapped them strongly. It rose into the air - and with it it took Peter, who was holding it - and the two little men as well!

The crowd shouted in surprise to see the chair rise up. The two little men were full of fear. They hung on with all their might. Peter climbed up and sat safely in the chair. He had got away from the crowd, at any rate. He wondered what to do with the little men who were hanging on to the chair. He couldn't make them fall - they might be hurt.

The chair rose high up. Peter suddenly cried out in alarm. "Hie, wishing-chair! Don't go home yet! We've left Mollie and Chinky behind! Fly down again, quickly."

The chair flew down at once. As soon as it was safely on the ground the two little men began to quarrel again about who was to have the chair. Peter got really angry. He pushed them both hard. They fell over.

"I wish you'd stop this," said Peter. "What's the good of quarrelling about ?//v chair? I'm going to have it, not you, Leave go!"

But they wouldn't. Peter picked up a twig and rapped their hands sharply. They let go at once - and before they could take hold again, what do you think happened? Why, the wishing-chair most obligingly disappeared! Peter blinked in surprise, for he still wasn't used to seeing things disappear so suddenly.

Then he knew what to do. If he picked up the chair and ran off with it, the two little men wouldn't know- where it had gone - for they could see neither Peter nor the chair, now! So Peter felt for the chair, and, quick as lightning, snatched it up and ran down the street! The two little men stared all round in astonishment, and then began to slap each other hard.

"Just what they both want!" thought Peter, pleased. He ran on and on and then stopped. He put the chair down just inside a field gate, sat down in it firmly, and tried to think what to do. How in the world could he find Mollie and Peter?

"If I go through the village again, yelling out Mollie and Chinky's names, maybe they'll hear me and come to me," thought Peter. "They must be very worried, because they don't know where the chair is!"

Back he went to the village, carrying the chair on his shoulder. As he went he shouted loudly, "MOLLIE! CHINKY! MOLLIE! CHINKY!"

Suddenly he heard Mollie's voice, answering. How glad Peter was! It came from the other side of the road. "Peter! I can hear you! I'm still invisible. Where are you?"

"I'm standing by the fruit-shop here!" yelled back Peter. "I've got the chair, too!"

In half a minute he felt Mollie's hands touching him, and then she hugged him and felt for the good old wishing-chair too. "Now we must get Chinky," said Peter. "What have you been doing all this time, Mollie?"

"Oh, I've been looking for you," said Mollie. "I went back to the yellow lamp-post but the chair was gone."

Just then someone they couldn't see bumped into them. He couldn't see them either, for they were still invisible. As soon as the person who bumped into them felt the chair, he gave a yell, and caught hold of it.

Peter snatched at the chair too. He pulled and Mollie helped him. They were not going to lose their precious chair! But the one who was pulling against them was very strong, and suddenly the chair was tugged right away, and they could no longer feel it. They couldn't see it either, of course - it was gone!

"Oh, it's gone, it's gone!" cried Mollie, almost in tears. "Oh, Peter, what shall we do now?"

"Mollie! Peter! Is it you!" cried a voice gladly. "It's me, Chinky! I didn't know I was pulling against you! I just came along the street, bumped into the chair, felt it was ours and grabbed it. When I felt someone pulling hard against me, I jerked till I got it! Hurrah! We're all together again!"

How pleased everyone was! "I've been looking everywhere for you," said Chinky, climbing on to the back of the chair. "My word - fancy the chair disappearing, too! This is a most uncomfortable sort of place. Come on - let's get away as soon as we can."

They all got on to the chair. It flapped its wings and rose up suddenly into the air. "Oooh!" said Mollie, "that was quick - it felt like a lift going up!"

"Chinky, how are we going to get ourselves right again?" asked Peter. "We can't go home like this."

"I can get some of that magic paint we once used at Witch Snippet's spinning house," said Chinky. "Then we'll paint ourselves back again. That's easy. I'll send one of my friends to get the paint for us."

The children flew on and on through the air until at last they were over their own garden once more. They flew down - and right through the open door of their playroom at the bottom of the garden. They were just going to shout and jump off - when they saw someone there!

It was their mother. She had come to look for them. The children sat perfectly still on the chair. They knew they were invisible and couldn't be seen. If Mother heard their voices, she would get such a shock, for she wouldn't be able to see them! Chinky sat still too. He had always made the children promise that they would never, never say a word about him to any grown-up.

Mother looked round the playroom. "I wonder where those children are," she said. Then she walked out, almost, but not quite, bumping into the wishing- chair as she went.

"My goodness! That was a narrow escape!" said Peter, when Mother had gone. He jumped out of the chair. "What a good thing the chair and all of us couldn't be seen today! Mother would have got a fright if she had suddenly seen a chair come flying through the doorway with us in it!"



"She certainly would," said Chinky, grinning. "So would anyone! Now, I'll just send for that paint."

He ran out. In a few minutes he was back and said that a friend of his had flown off to Witch Snippit's at once.

"Let's play a game of ludo whilst we're waiting," he said. "I haven't played since you went away to school. I've forgotten what a lovely feeling it is to throw a six!"

It was rather peculiar to play with people you couldn't see. It was even funnier to see counters moving by themselves, as the children pushed them round the board. They just had time to play one game, when there came a knock at the door.

"The paint!" said Chinky. He opened the door. On the step stood a large tin of Witch Snippit's magic paint. "Good!" said Chinky. "Now, what about brushes?"

"There are some in our paint-boxes," said Mollie, and she fetched them. "They are very small - it will take us ages to paint ourselves right again!"

They began. They each had a paint-brush and they set to work. Chinky painted the wishing-chair back first. Mollie began to paint herself back. Wherever she ran her brush full of paint a bit of her appeared! It was funny.

Mollie ran her brush over her left hand. At once it appeared. It was nice to see her fingers again!

"You haven't painted that little nail on your fingers," said Peter. "Look!"

"And vow've painted all your face back except your left eyebrow," laughed Mollie. "You look funny!"

The wishing-chair was soon back again. Then Chinky began to paint himself back. They all had to help each other when they came to bits of themselves that they couldn't reach. They had great fun.

"We're quite done except that Peter hasn't got his feet vet," said Chinky, and he stepped back to look at him - and do you know, he stepped right on to the tin of paint and upset it. It ran all over the floor and the floor

disappeared! The paint always acted both ways - it made things disappear, or it made them come back if they had vanished.

"Chinky! You are clumsy!" cried Mollie, in horror. "We shan't be able to do Peter's feet! Whatever will Mother say?"

Peter caught up a rag and mopped up the spilt paint as fast as he could. He squeezed it from the rag into the tin, and then looked at the little bit there anxiously.

"Do you think there's enough for my feet?" he said. Chinky, who had gone very red, nodded his head, and took up his paint-brush again. Without a word he began to paint in Peter's feet, being very careful not to waste a drop of the precious paint. Mollie was very glad to see that there was enough.

"What about that hole in the floor?" said Peter. "Is there enough paint left to paint it back again?"

"Just!" said Chinky - and there was! My goodness, there wasn't a single drop over.

"Well," said Mollie, as she heard a bell ring to call them indoors, "we always seem to have narrow escapes and exciting times when we begin going off in the wishing-chair. I did enjoy this adventure, now it's all over and we're safely back again, looking like ourselves!"

"Good-bye," said Chinky. "See you tomorrow, I hope! It's been lovely to go adventuring again!"

The End.